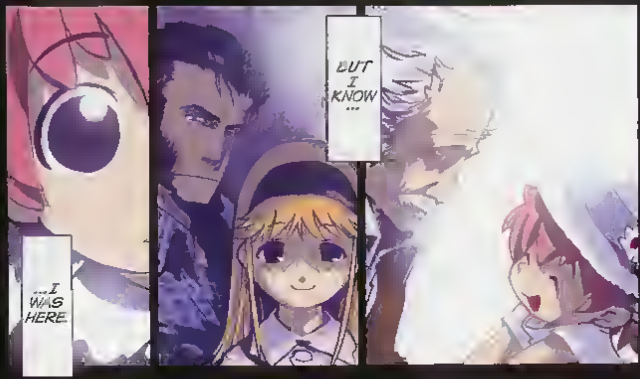
cmx
PANSY
WANTED
$6,000,000,000
CHIKYU MISAKI
IWAHARA YUJI
3

HOW LONG I WAS HERE ...

I'M SURE I CAME TO THIS VIL-LAGE TEN YEARS AGO.

...I DON'T CLEARLY REMEM-BER.
... WHO I MET HERE ...


...I WAS HERE.
BUT I KNOW ...

CHAPTER 12
THOSE WHO KNOW THE TRUTH

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BUT YES, IT'S TRUE.
I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME.
SEE!
IS THAT REALLY TRUE?
I'M CERTAIN I MET NEO ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO.
CHA
JOLT
POW
?!
ZA
ZA
ZA

G'EM OT!
YEAH!
!
AND I BELIEVED YOUR STORY, ASAI-SAN.
YOU CAN STOP CALLING ME ASAI-SAN.
CALL ME TOKU-KO.
FLAP
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
SPLASH
WELL MY STORY IS MORE BELIEV ABLE

BLUB
BLUB
BLUB
BELIEV-ABLE?
SWISH
DARN!
HE GOT AWAY!
PL UP
PL OP
NEO'S WARM-BLOODED.
HIS HEART RACES WHEN HE GETS HUGGED.
HIS KISSES FEEL LIKE THE REAL THING.
I'M TALKING ABOUT THE SHAPE-SHIFTING!
.....

GIVE ME THAT GUN!
TH--
THIS ONE?
KA CH AK
HUH?
THE GUN!
!
WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR HIM TO SHAPE SHIFT?
SHOOP
BLUB BLUB BLUB
IS IT BECAUSE HE WANTS TO BE WITH YOU?
I'M NOT LETTIN' THIS ONE GET AWAY!
HA HA HA
CLICK
SHIVER
?
?
SHIVER
THAT REALLY ALL?

FLASH
!
KLAK
TURN ON THE LIGHT!
?!
!
!
THERE IT IS!
ISN'T THERE REALLY A MORE CONCRETE REASON?
POSH
WELL...
BLAM
LICK
LOOK OUT THERE!
?
?
HEY! THERE'S A LIGHT OUT ON THE LAKE.

GABAT
!!!!
SHOOSH
PASH

MISAKI-SAN!
THUD
CRACK
AH!
TWANG
WHAT IS IT?
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH... I'M OKAY.
BUT...!!
GLUB
GLUB GLUB GLUB
I'VE GOTTA GO TO HIM!
IT'S JUST LIKE BACK IN THE MISAKI HOSPITAL.
I CAN FEEL NEO'S PAIN.

CHAK
HA... HA HA HA
BULL'S EYE!
I NAILED 'IM!
RAT TLE
HEY!!!
RAT TLE
I DID IT!
HA HA HA HA
BEEP
HE CAN'T GET AWAY NOW!
BEEP

WHAT AM I DOING?
WHAT THE HECK AM I DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?
HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
WHAT THE--
pant
pant
pant
MISAKI MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
WHAT THE...?
YOU LOOK A LITTLE TIRED, ASAI-SAN?
?!!
TWITCH
pant
pant
CREAK
SLIDE
SLIDE
PHEW
SLAM
phew

WHO'S THERE?
WHO IS IT?
CLOP
CLOP
SSSHHHHHHHHHH
JERK
GAH!
GACHAK
THE OTORI 展 COLLECTION
THE OTORI COLLECTION?
.....?

FLASH
DA DUM
THIS NEW EXHIBIT IS SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN A FEW DAYS
HEH HEH HEH
RATHER INTERESTING, DON'T YOU THINK?
!
WE RECEIVED IT PRACTICALLY FREE, SO WE CAN HARDLY COMPLAIN.
ALMOST ALL THE PIECES DISPLAYED HERE ARE FROM HIS PRIVATE COLLECTION.
STILL, TRUTH BE TOLD...
FOR EXAMPLE...
...HE DISCOVERED THIS PLESIOSAUR HIMSELF, AND ASSEMBLED THE SKELETON.
...THIS IS NOT WHAT I WANT.
GRIND GRIND
THE MAJORITY OF THE BONES ARE WELL-CRAFTED REPLICAS.

I FORGOT TO INTRODUCE MYSELF.
OH, FORGIVE ME.
.....
I AM SAWAKI JUICHIRO.
THE CURATOR OF THE MISAKI MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.
CURATOR?
YOU MEAN... YOU'RE...
YES.
AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, YOU'RE THE CLIENT WHO HAD HIS OWN DAUGHTER KIDNAPPED.
I ALSO KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE IN MISAKI.
OR TO PUT IT IN SIMPLER TERMS...
...I'M THE "PICK-UP MAN."
PLEASED TO FINALLY MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.

DARN!
IT'S QUITE PUZZLING.
heh heh heh
THE ONLY MYSTERY IS WHY A MAN LIKE YOU, FROM SUCH AN EXTREMELY WEALTHY FAMILY, IS IN SUCH DIRE NEED OF MONEY.
HE WAS ALREADY UNDER POLICE SURVEILLANCE FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE ACCIDENT AND COULDN'T ESCAPE.
BUT I DO KNOW WHY HE [redacted] ELIMINATED.
heh heh heh
HEAVENS, NO!
ARE YOU THE ONE WHO KILLED THAT MAN IN THE HOSPITAL?
THAT GOLD?! IT'S MINE, NOT...
TH--
SOMEONE MADE [redacted] JUDGMENT.
IT WOULD BE NO GOOD IF HE WERE TO START TALKING NOW.
SO TO ENSURE THAT WE COULD SAVE THE GOLD FOR CARRYING OUT OUR BIGGER PLAN, HE WAS DISPOSED O-
DON'T BE FOOLISH.
AND I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO TELL YOU.
IT'S NOW UNDER MY CONTROL.
THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE GOLD IS ME.
SNICKER

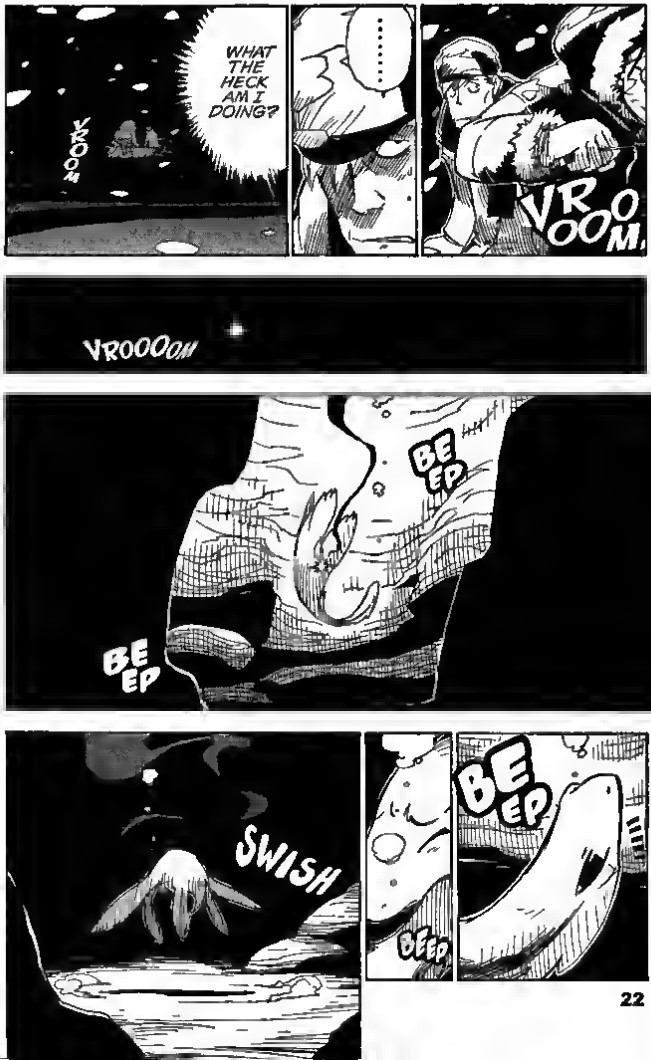
SHUDDER
MY BIG, BIG, PLAN.
LICK
?!
GULP
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO BE DISAPPOINTED ABOUT. I'LL EVEN LET YOU IN ON [redacted].
WHAT?!
I SAW IT ALL!
heh heh heh
AT THAT PLACE, ON THAT DAY.
PLAN?
I SAW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED!

BWA..
BWAHAHAHA
HAHAHAHA
FW
HOOSH
AND THEN...
FWHOOSH
FINALLY SPOTTED
IT WAS THE REAL THING! THE ONE I HAD BEEN CHASING FOR TEN YEARS!
THAT'S IT!
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!
BWAHAHA
BO
BO
WHAP
UGH
DARN IT.
SCRAPE
SCRAPE
JUST WHEN I NEED THEM THE MOST!
DARN!
BO
BO
BO
?!

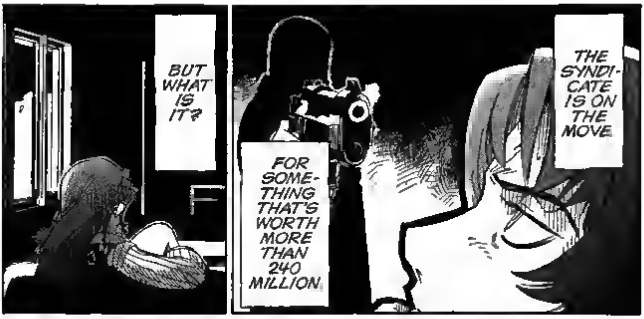
tch!
WOOF
WOOF
?!
WOOF
THIS ITSELF IS PROFESSOR OTORI'S GREATEST LEGACY!
THE MIRACULOUS CREATURE THAT WILL PRODUCE INCREDIBLE RICHES!
BWA
HAHAHA

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
BWA HAHA
I AM GRATEFUL, MISTER ASAI!
THANKS TO YOUR FOOLISH LITTLE SCHEME...
...I HAVE FINALLY ABLE TO CONFIRM ITS EXISTENCE!
HA HA HA
HA
SORRY...
I GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY THERE
.....

I JUST CAME TO INSPECT TODAY. I DON'T HAVE THE PROPER EQUIPMENT FOR A CAPTURE.
CALL IN ALL THE MEN WE STATIONED AROUND THE LAKE. WE'RE DONE FOR THE DAY.
BEEP
Grin
BEEP
CLUNK
CLICK
BEEP


VROOM
WHAT THE HECK AM I DOING?
.....
VROOOM
VROOOOM
BEEP
BEEP
SWISH
BEEP
BEEP

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
THROB
BEEP
板東製材所
SLIP
SIGH
SQUEAK
THUMP
CLOP
CLOP


BUT WHAT IS IT?
FOR SOME-THING THAT'S WORTH MORE THAN 240 MILLION.
THE SYNDI-CATE IS ON THE MOVE.

!
CLICK
FLASH

CLOMP
CLOMP
.....
CLATTER
HEY...
YOU!

RIP
WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING?!
SLAP
FLIP
WHAT'S WITH THIS BAND-AID?!
WH--
WH--
WH--
STING
?!
.....

I LOVE YOU♡
TWITCH
WHAT'S THAT?!
BA
I LOVE YOU♡
DUM
STICK
A DOODLE?
YEAH.
SUZU... YOUR SISTER?
.....
IT'S JUST A DOODLE.
SNATCH
SUZU DREW IT ON WITH A MARKER PEN.

LIKE I TOLD YOU, I WENT TO VISIT MY SISTER.
MISLEADING! THAT WAS
WHO IN THE HECK ARE YOU?!

I COULD ASK YOU THE SAME THING.
WHO WAS THAT GUY BEFORE?
DIDN'T HE COME TO INVESTIGATE PROFESSOR OTORI?

SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE ARGUING.
OTORI?
WHO'S THAT?
SQUIRM
SQUIRM
SQUIRM

IF I LEAVE NOW, I'LL GET SHOT BY THAT BURGLAR.
WHAT AM I GONNA DO?
SNIFF
I GOTTA GO TO THE BATHROOM!
WHAT DO I DO?
Sweat
Sweat
WHY NOW OF ALL TIMES...

AND ANYWAY, WHY DOES HE HAVE A SECRET ROOM IN THIS HOUSE?
THIS ISN'T JUST A STORAGE ROOM...

RISE
DON'T TELL ME THAT'S THE PICTURE OF ...?!

THAT FILM ...

.....
?

SHUHH
THAT'S IT!
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANY-MORE
?!
WHAM
WOOF
WOOF
GACHK
THANK GOD!
WAH!!
?!
CLUNK
WHAT'S THAT?
WOOF
WOOF
MAYBE IT'S A TOILET!

HUH?
SPLISH
WHAT'S THAT?
WOOO
A CAVE?
SLAM
SHIVER SHIVER
SHUDDER
SHUDDER
AH!
.....

SHSHSHSH
BESIDES, IT WAS AN EMERGENCY.
AH, IT DOESN'T MATTER. I JUST WON'T TELL ANYONE.
AHH
JOLT
BEEP
.....
EWA
GYAAH!!
P
NUP
PEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
FLAP

HELP!
SNAP
SNAP
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
GA CH A
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?!
IS THIS A SECRET ROOM?
WHO THE HECK ARE YOU REALLY?
?!

IF NEO DIES, IT'S MY FAULT.
I DO? WHAT DO
I DO? WHAT DO
SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
SNIFF
WHAT WE DO?
I'LL
BLUB
BLUB
HE'S LIMP... HE'S NOT MOVING.
I WAS HITTING HIM.
SNIFF
IT WAS DARK...I COULDN'T SEE...
HUG
WITH THOSE FRAIL LITTLE ARMS OF YOURS, YOU COULDN'T HAVE HURT HIM MUCH NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU HIT HIM.
THAT'S NOT WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM.
HUH?
WH--
WHAT THE--?
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
HERE'S THE TROUBLE.

BE EP
HOW CRUEL...
DON'T THEY KNOW HOW MUCH THIS HURTS?
GRR
.....

THE OTHER FORM OF THE BOY WITH THE COLLAR...
IT'S JUST LIKE MY DREAM...

BUT ...
YOU CAN'T GO OUT TO THE LAKE WHEN IT'S THIS DARK! IT'S TOO DANGER-OUS!
WAIT, NO!

SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO NEO!
I JUST KNOW IT!
THAT'S WHY I'VE GOT TO GO!
CALM DOWN AND LOOK!
YOU CAN'T SEE A THING!
YOU SAID YOURSELF YOU FELL IN THE LAKE ONCE!
LEMME GO!
GU
GU GU GU
TUG
TUG
AS A FRIEND I CAN'T LET YOU GO OUT THERE!
ZAT
I'M STUCK!
HELP!
A FROG?
SH
OOP
GYAH!
THUD
WHUMP

SPOIK
HM?
GA SHA
MISAKI-CHAN! GET IN!
I KNOW WHERE HE IS!
Smile
I'M NOT SURPRISED YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME.
IT'S ALMOST BEEN TEN YEARS.
IT'S ME, SUZU.
I'M SUZU BANDO.
12 END

cmx 想 FANTASY

CHIKYU MISAKI

A chance encounter with a strange creature leads one young girl on a journey into mystery...that could unlock the secrets of her past!

Neo's secret is out and the race is on to see who finds him first!

In this final volume, Misaki and Tokuko reveal their stories to each other, and Bando tells Reiko about his sister. A shadowy figure combs the lake looking for Neo. As the pieces of the Hohoro mystery come together, everyone converges on the lake to see who will discover its treasures first!

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T
TEEN
PARTIAL NUDITY

grin
SUZU-SAN?
BANDO...
VROOM
EMER-GENCY MEDICAL CARE?!
DON'T WORRY. "HE" IS GETTING EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE BACK AT OUR HOUSE.
VROOM
SO, NEO'S BADLY HURT, ISN'T HE?! I KNEW IT!
YOU CAN FEEL IT, CAN'T YOU?
HIS PAIN.
DID HE HAVE AN ACCI-DENT?
WHAT WAS IT?!
VROOOM
SIS-TER?
I JUST SORT OF CALLED YOUR MOTHER THAT, BACK WHEN I WAS A CHILD.
WELL...
AH...
VROOM
YOU'RE JUST LIKE SISTER KAORU.
Snicker

PHEW
Ah..
HE'LL BE OKAY NOW.
DON'T WORRY.
CLINK
BEEP
I'LL KEEP A SECRET.
I SWORE.
VROOM
SO, SUZU... YOU KNOW ABOUT NEO?
AND ABOUT MY MOTHER... AND WHAT HAPPENED TEN YEARS AGO?
VROOM
TEN YEARS AGO, IN THIS TOWN...

CHAPTER 13
THE DAY NEO WAS BORN

GA CHAK
quack quack
COMING!
ANYBODY HOME?
GOOD MORNING!
UH... HELLO.
GOOD TO SEE YOU, AOI-CHAN.
quack
GOOD MORNING, SUZU-CHAN.
HELLO, PROFES-SOR.
AOI-SAN.
quack
SHUFFLE
YES...
...BUT THAT'S NOT THE ONLY THING.
grin
THANK YOU, SIR.
GOOD FOR YOU.
I HEAR YOU PASSED THE BAR EXAM.
DID YOU COME TO SEE KAORU?

THIS IS SAWAKI JUICHIRO.
HE'S AN ASSISTANT CURATOR AT THE NEW MISAKI MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.
GOOD MORNING, SIR.
PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINT-ANCE.
I HEARD A GREAT DEAL ABOUT YOU FROM MY GRAND-FATHER BEFORE HE DIED.
SAWAKI...
AH... SO YOU'RE SAWAKI'S GRANDSON.
NOD
NICE TO MEET YOU.
THANK YOU, SIR.
SAWAKI IS A VERY DILIGENT RESEARCHER. BEFORE HE STARTS UP AT THE MUSEUM, HE WOULD LIKE A CHANCE TO STUDY WITH YO...
af

I'D REALLY LOVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF A FAMOUS PALEONTOLOGIST LIKE YOURSELF SIR.
I HOPE I CAN MAKE MYSELF USEFUL.
THE MAYOR CONTACTED ME AND ASKED ME TO INTRODUCE HIM.
BLUSH
SMIRK
I KNOW.
I'M ONLY AN AMATEUR.
.....
.....
I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN SUCH A LONG TIME. I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO SEE HER.
KAORU NOT BACK YET?
I'LL BET MISAKI-CHAN LOOKS JUST LIKE HER

SMILE
GLOK
HA HA HA
YAH!
GLOK
CLOK
CLOK
GRANDPA!
HO HO HO HO
HONEY!
THAT GUY WAS PLANNING TO INVESTIGATE PROFESSOR OTORI RIGHT FROM THE START
I KNEW THE PROFESSOR WASN'T JUST A PALEONTOLOGIST.
LONG TIME NO SEE, KAORU.
YOU LOOK GOOD, AOI-CHAN.

HE PROBABLY THOUGHT IF HE DIDN'T DO SOMETHING THIS EXTREME, HE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO CATCH IT.
ZZZ
ZZZ
CREAK
HE WASN'T A PALEONTOLOGIST?
IS THAT THE GUY WHO DID THIS?
I THINK SO.
SO THAT MEANS HE THINKS IT'S WORTH IT TO CATCH HIM, RIGHT?
HUH?
THAT IT'S OKAY TO DO ANYTHING, AS LONG AS IT'S STILL ALIVE?
YES.
PROFESSOR... WHY DID YOU LET THAT GUY STAY?
THAT'S WHY THE PROFESSOR HAD TO KEEP IT SECRET.

SAWAKI-KUN WAS CERTAINLY A RESEARCH COLLEAGUE OF MINE. AND THIS IS HIS GRANDSON.
SAWAKI-KUN PROBABLY FIGURED OUT WHAT I WAS DOING
I DON'T TRUST THAT GUY, EITHER.
YES...
I DON'T BELIEVE FOR A SECOND THAT HE'LL KEEP OUR SECRET
WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, HE'S GOING TO FIND HIS WAY IN HERE.
RECENTLY, HIS GRANDSON JUICHIRO MUST HAVE LAID EYES ON IT.
HE MUST HAVE WRITTEN A JOURNAL OR SOMETHING.
G Rip
...BUT THAT WOULD CONFIRM HIS SUSPICIONS.
IT WOULD BE EASY ENOUGH TO REFUSE HIM...
HE MIGHT HAVE GUESSED...
THUMP
THUMP
...THAT THE PROJECT IS NEARLY COMPLETED!
THUMP

IT'S ALL RIGHT.
THERE'S NO PROBLEM.
JUST KEEP UP YOUR NORMAL ROUTINES.
FORTUNATELY, HE DOESN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR.
AND THAT MUST BE WHY HE HAS COME TO HOHORO.
SHOOP
HE'LL PROBABLY GIVE UP AFTER A LITTLE WHILE.
WAIT!

PROFESSOR.
LOOKING FOR SOMETHING, SAWAKI-KUN?
UH... NOT REALLY...
CHEEP
CHEEP
.....
WAIT!
hm hm hm
quack quack
quack
GASHAN
quack quack
THE MUSEUM WILL BE COMPLETED SOON.
GUESS YOU'LL BE GETTING READY TO LEAVE US.
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
WE'LL MISS YOU.
WELL, THANKS.
WHAT ARE THESE CHICKS?
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
OH, THESE?
WHAT?
SOME KIND OF VIRUS IS SPREADING AMONG THE GEESE.
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
I WANT TO TRY ADMINISTERING A VACCINE.
STILL THE ACTIVE SCIENTIST, EH?
CHEEP
CHEEP
CHEEP
NO, I RETIRED A LONG TIME AGO.

A SECRET PROJECT?
WAS IT JUST MY GRAND-FATHER BABBLING?
HMM...
W.C.
TOILE
OCCU
CHEEP
CHEEP
JUST A TOTTERING OLD MAN.
NOW-ADAYS, I'M ONLY FIT FOR BONES AND ROCKS.
HO HO HO
HO HO
JUST SKIN AND BONES.
THERE WAS SOME HIDDEN ROOM, I WOULD HAVE FOUND IT BY NOW.
HMPH
AND NO PLACE FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
COME TO THINK OF IT, THERE'S NO EQUIPMENT AROUND THAT COULD DO IT.
PWHHH
Flip
I GUESS GRAND-FATHER WAS JUST BAB-BLING.
RATTLE
RATTLE
RATTLE
PWHHHH

CREAK
CREAAAK
CLOP CLOP
QUACK QUACK
WAIT...
GYAH GYAH
GOT YA!
HA HA HA
DOT
YAH!
QUIET DOWN, MISAKI.
WE DON'T WANT TO DISTURB GRANDFATHER.
DO WE?
UMM?

WE'RE GIVING THE CHICKS SOME MEDICINE SO THEY WON'T BE SICK.
OH, MISAKI ...
HM?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE GOOSE BABIES?
CHEEP
SHH
CHEEP
AHH...
PROFES-SOR.
THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE TO PUT UP WITH GETTING SHOTS
YES... BUT IF THEY GOT SICK, IT WOULD HURT A LOT MORE.
DOES IT HURT?
SIMPLY HAVE TO DESTROY THEM
BUT WE HAVE NO CHOICE
IT'S A PITY FOR THEM...
HM...
WHAT DO WE DO?
IT'S PROBABLY SPREAD TO SOME OF THE EGGS.
FOUND TWO MORE THAT HAVE CAUGHT THE VIRUS

SAWAKI!
NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILD.
PAT
IT'S JUST AS SAWAKI-SAN SAYS.
NO, STOP.
YOU GONNA KILL HIM?
MISAKI SHOULD GROW UP FACING THE TRUTH ABOUT
AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT I THINK.
QUACK QUACK QUACK
TAK TAK TAK
CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP

CHUNK
SHIVER
OH!
quack
quack
quack
FLA
FLAP
quack
quack
KLAK
ROLL ROLL
SSHHHHHHHH
POP
POP
ROLL
!!
SPLAT

VROOM
HUH?
I JUST REMEMBERED!
AH!
ZAAAA
AT THAT TIME, I...
THAT'S IT.
HO HO HO HO
I'M SURE SAWAKI-SAN WILL BE THERE IN NO TIME.
HEE HEE HEE HEE
MAYBE IN THE FUTURE, YOU'LL SNAG THE HEAD CURATOR'S JOB!
THANKS TO THE PROFESSOR, I'VE DEVELOPED THE CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ON THE DUTIES OF ASSISTANT CURATOR AT THE NEW MUSEUM.
clink
CHEERS!
I ENJOYED BEING HERE.
THANK YOU, EVERYONE.

HA HA HA HA
AH HA HA HA
AH HA HA HA
EGG
HEH HEH HEH HEH
SO FUYUHIKO'S NOT JOINING US TONIGHT?
WELL... BIG BROTHER DOESN'T LIKE THIS KIND OF THING.
WE ALL KNOW IT'S BECAUSE HE HATES ME.
CLATTER
I'M NOT HUNGRY!
turn
DON'T YOU WANT ANY?
WHAT'S WRONG, HONEY?
munch munch
MISAKI?
IT'S BECAUSE OF THE GEESE.
SHE SEEMS REALLY UPSET.
KIDS ARE LIKE THAT.
SHE'LL FORGET ABOUT IT SOON.
TAT TAT TAT
MISAKI!
CLATTER

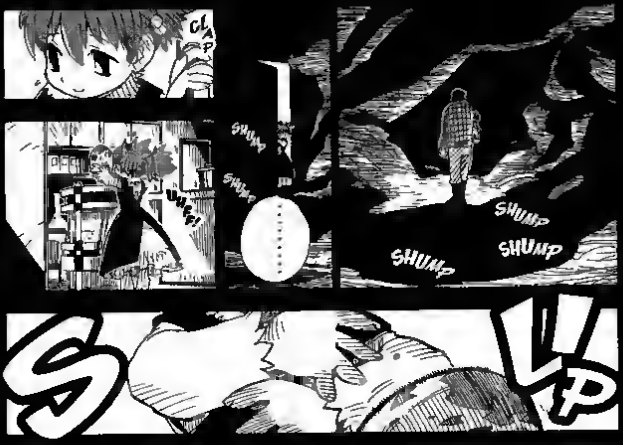
HOO
HOO
ZZZ
ZZZ
BANG
BANG
BANG
BLINK
huff
huff
I'VE GOT TO HELP THEM.
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING.
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZZ
GROAN

KLAK
shhh
shhh
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
KLAK
CREAK
Twitch
WHO'S THERE?
?!
tch!

TAK TAK
TAK
WHAP
THUD
!
CLUNK
?!
TAK TAK TAK
.....
CREAK
ROLL
CREAK
Vmmmm

90 WARM ...
...
PAT
Vmmmm
hee hee hee
AHHH...
PAT
PAT
umph!
TUCK TUCK
GLANCE
GLANCE
GACHA
GACHA
GACHA
GACHA
TAT TAT TAT
GACHA
GACHA
?
PAT
YEAH...

GACHAK
CREAK
WS H
h
h
RATTLE RATTLE
JOLT
?!
RATTLE RATTLE
Vmmm
CHAK
TURN
SLAM
KLAK
KLAK
PHEW


SHUMP
SHUMP
SHUMP
SHUMP
SHUMP
SLIP

CRACK
CLUMP

HIZ...
...HIZ
WAAAH
AHH...
MISAKI...
WIGGLE WIGGLE
POK
WAAH
WAAAHH

WAH
NOOOOO!!
NO!!
WAAH
WAAH
WAH
NOO!!
C. OK
PECHOK
PLOP
PAT
PAT
I'M SO SORRY !!
SQUIRT
BLOP
SPLOP
I'M SORRY !!
BLOP
PLOP
FURU
FURU
PLOP
PURU
SNIFF
?!

.....
SNIFF
SNIFF
PURU
PURU
PURU
E-HEH!
HEH HEH HEH HEH
HEH HEH HEH

I WAS SO HAPPY.
VROOM
I FELT HIS WARMTH.
I STAYED WITH HIM UNTIL THE MORNING ...
SINCE I STILL COULDN'T OPEN THE DOOR I CAME IN FROM...
IT ALL SOUNDS RATHER FOOLISH, MISAKI-CHAN.
VRMM
DROP-PING THE EGG, GETTING LOCKED IN...
HA HA... YEAH, I GUESS.
BUT STILL ...
... YOU'RE RIGHT.
I WAS A PRETTY FOOLISH GIRL.
WHAT HAP-PENED AFTER THAT?

I WAS SURE THAT IF THEY FOUND US, THE NEWBORN WOULD BE KILLED.
IN THE MORNING I COULD HEAR THE COMMOTION WHEN THEY FIGURED OUT I WAS MISSING
CARRYING HIM IN MY ARMS, I OPENED THE DOOR WHERE THE BIG MAN HAD COME IN, AND RAN OUT.
VROOOM
AH!
THAT MAN MUST HAVE BEEN MY BROTHER.
I DON'T REMEMBER HOW FAR I RAN
BUT FINALLY I CAME TO SOME KIND OF UNDERGROUND LAKE
AND THEN ...
GO! GET AWAY!

BLUE
SPLASH
I'LL COME FIND YOU!
I PROMISE!
IF ONLY YOU WERE HUMAN...
...WE COULD BE TOGETHER...
...FOREVER.
I COMPLETELY FORGOT IT.
VROOM
IF I HADN'T BEEN SO FOOLISH...
...NEO WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD SO MUCH TROUBLE.
THAT MAY BE TRUE...
EVEN SO...
Grin
...I THINK IT'S GOOD THAT YOU SET HIM FREE.

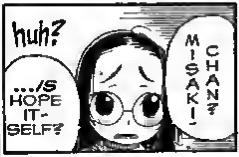
MISAKI-CHAN, FOR HIM...
NO.
...AND FOR US YOU'RE HOPE ITSELF.

VROOM
OKAY.
WE'RE HERE!
CRUNCH CRUNCH

.....
?

GACHAK

.....


'huh?
...IS HOPE ITSELF?
MISAKI-CHAN?

THAT'S RIGHT! FOR THE PROFESSOR AND EVERYONE.

BLINK
SANAE-CHAN! WHAT HAP-PENED?
UH... WELL...
MISAKI-CHAN!
PAT
NEO?!
WHERE'S NEO
FUJI-KAWA...
...REIKO?
!
13 END

YES...
YES...
THE YOUNG MISTRESS APPEARS TO BE FEELING BETTER.
IF MASTER SENZO WERE TO REQUEST IT, I'M SURE MISTRESS TOKUKO WOULD PROMPTLY RETURN HOME.
WHAT?
MASTER KEIGO IS HERE?
...I SEE.
I UNDERSTAND, SIR.
TOMORROW, THEN.
WELL, THEN.
ZA-
ZAT
ZAT
BEEP
BEEP

WHAT?!
MIS-TRESS IS NOT HERE?!
WE THOUGHT SHE WAS WITH YOU!
MORONS! YOU
MISTRESS!
.....?!

LOVED BY EVERYONE

.....
HUH?
WHAT'S WRONG, TOKUKO-CHAN?
!
CLUMP
WE'RE HOME!
WHY IS ASAI TOKUKO HERE?
CHAN? TOKUKO-
AH!
FORGET ABOUT THAT, BROTHER, WHERE IS HE?
WHERE'S NEO?
YEAH!
HA ...HA HA ...
YOU MEAN YOU DIDN'T NOTICE UNTIL NOW, MISAKI-CHAN?
WHAT ...THIS?
I HAD A LITTLE FALL DOWN THE STAIRS.
SUZU-SAN, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR LEG?!

IS NEO ALL RIGHT?
LEMME SEE SHIM!
.....
IF YOU MEAN THAT THING, SUZU, HE'S IN YOUR BEDROOM.
CREAK
NEO!!
PLOP

NEO, YOUR ARM ...!
WHAT?!
HE WAS SHOT WITH A TRACER BEACON.
I REMOVED IT AND TREATED THE WOUND.
IT WAS SAWAKI WHO DID IT.
SAWAKI
...?!
.....
NEO. SORRY, I'M
Hu
G
Ahh...
IF ONLY I'D COME SOONER.
IT DOESN'T HURT. FOR-GIVE ME.
CHAN... MISAKI!
I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN.
HE'S ALL RIGHT, NOW.

SHE SHOWS UP OUT OF NOWHERE-AND STANDS THERE SILENT AS A STATUE.
.....
WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE?
WHAT IS SHE THINKING?
IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S ALL ALONE. DID SHE COME WITHOUT CALLING THE POLICE?
EH?
HE CAN ALREADY CHANGE TO A HUMAN, CAN'T HE?
I SAW HIM THAT WAY ONCE BEFORE.
YEAH. WE SHOULD HAVE HIM CHANGE NOW.
DIDN'T REALIZE WHO HE WAS AT THE TIME.
.....
I WISH IT HAD BEEN SOONER. I SO WANTED TO SEE YOU.
I'M GLAD I COULD FINALLY MEET YOU, NEO.

I DON'T KNOW...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WE CAN'T GET HIM TO CHANGE NOW.
EVER SINCE THAT TIME IN THE HOSPITAL...
REALLY?
HOSPITAL...? EVER SINCE THEN?
I FEEL SORRY FOR THAT KID...
BUT I CAN'T GET MY HANDS ON THE GOLD, AND NOW THAT GIRL IS HERE. I'VE GOT NO MORE REASON TO STICK AROUND.
.....!
JOLT
RUNNING AWAY SO SOON?
?!
I'M OUT OF HERE.

YOU'LL IGNORE AN INJURED PERSON AND RUN AWAY, JUST LIKE LAST TIME?
FUJIKAWA REIKO!
.....!!
TOKUKO SAYS FUJIKAWA REIKO IS ONE OF THE GANG THAT KIDNAPPED HER!
WHAT?! THEN SHE WASN'T A HOSTAGE?! AND HER NAME'S NOT NAKABAYASHI?
.....
TURN
WHAT?
YOU MUST BE MISTAKING ME FOR SOMEONE ELSE.
IF YOU'RE NOT FUJIKAWA REIKO, THEN WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO SNEAK OUT?
NOW I UNDERSTAND COMPLETELY.
THE MEANING OF THOSE TEARS.

THE CREATURE IS LIKE ME.
hee hee
YOU DIDN'T JUST WARM IT IN YOUR BED AND THEN TAKE IT BACK?
EH?
SOR-RY.
I GUESS I EMBEL-LISHED A LITTLE BIT.
EVER SINCE MISAKI DROPPED THE EGG, AND HE CAME INTO THE WORLD, HE'S BEEN COMPLETELY ALONE.
?
HE WAITED ...
IN THE DEPTHS OF THE LAKE, HE HOPED THAT THE WORLD WOULD CHANGE.
HE DREAMED THAT SOMEONE SPECIAL WOULD APPEAR, AND CHANGE THE WORLD FOR HIM.
... AND HE KEPT WAIT-ING.

THE WORLD DID CHANGE.
HE WASN'T ALONE.
AND THEN THAT SPECIAL PERSON APPEARED.
AND HIS DREAM CAME TRUE.
NOT LIKE BEFORE.
BUT IT DIDN'T LAST.
HOHOPO! IT'S A
IN THE END, HE REALIZED THAT HE WAS DIFFERENT FROM HIS SURROUNDINGS.
AND HE WAS ALONE AGAIN.
NOW HE'S AFRAID TO THINK PAINFUL THOUGHTS.
AND SO HE CLOSES OFF HIS HEART.
THAT'S WHY HE CAN'T CHANGE SHAPE.
THAT'S WHY...
...HE'S LIKE ME.

YOU'LL JUST RUN AWAY.
YOU CAN'T HELP THIS CHILD.
I SPENT A LOT OF TIME THINKING ABOUT HOW TO SETTLE THINGS UP WITH YOU.
NOW I SEE THE ANSWER CLEARLY.
I'LL PROTECT THIS CREATURE.
I'M DONE WITH YOU. I'M NOT GOING TO CONTACT THE POLICE. GO WHEREVER YOU WANT TO.
WH-
AWAY FROM HERE! I HAVE TO RUN COME. I WOULDN'T IF SHE HADN'T
HERE. GOLD IS STILL MY LIFE. AND THE THE BOY SAVED
TWITCH
TWITCH
.....
heh heh
TO STOP ME?! SHE TRYING SAYING'S WHAT IS SHE
HELP THE BOY? THAT I DIDN'T WITH ME?! SHE'S DONE GETTING AT? WHAT IS SHE
GRR
GRR

LEAN
SHOW ME, THEN. SHOW ME HOW YOU'VE MADE UP YOUR MIND.
YOU SEEM SO SURE OF YOUR-SELF.
NOW THAT WAS PRETTY FUNNY!
!
HA HA HA
?!
AH HA HA HA HA HA
I OWE A LOT TO THAT KID.
IF YOU REALLY MEAN YOU WON'T CALL THE POLICE, THEN I DON'T HAVE TO GO ANY-WHERE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?!
HEH HEH
LET'S SEE IF YOU REALLY CAN PROTECT THIS CREATURE RIGHT UP TO THE END.
I'M NOT YOUR TEACH-ER ANY-MORE.
I CAN DO WHAT-EVER I WANT.
WE'LL NEVER NEED YOUR HELP!
EVEN-TUALLY, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED MY HELP.
THAT GUY SAWAKI HAS HIRED THE SYN-DICATE.
AND ALSO ...
CATE? SYNDI!

AND TO DO THAT...
GRAAA
?
I'M DEFINITELY GOING TO GET THAT GOLD!
I'VE STILL GOT MY PRIDE, TOO!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU SAY YOU WON'T LEAVE, I'LL FORCE YOU OUT!
SHE SAYS SHE'LL HELP NEO.
HEY, CALM DOWN!
HMPH!
I KNOW YOU'LL BETRAY US THE FIRST CHANCE YOU GET!
ALLOW IT! I WON'T
DON'T WORRY, I'LL PAY FOR ANY FURNITURE THAT GETS BROKEN.
SIGH
SAID LIKE A SPOILED RICH GIRL.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
NOW, YOU TWO...
.....
LET ME GO!
BLEH
STOP IT! SOMEBODY'LL GET HURT.
DON'T WORRY, I KNOW TERAUCHI STYLE JUJUTSU.
STILL
BUT
IF YOU'RE GONNA FIGHT, GO OUTSIDE. YOU'LL BREAK THE FURNITURE.

KID?
NEO?
I WON'T TOLERATE...
UN UN
AH...
OH...
BLUB BLUB
BELIEVE IN YOUR POSSIBILITIES.
SO BELIEVE IT.
THAT'S RIGHT, NEO. YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

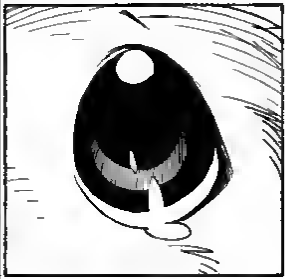
BOOM
BOOM

IT'S NO COINCI-DENCE THAT YOU CAN SHAPE-SHIFT.

FLAP
NEO?

YOU MEAN ...
...YOU WANT TO TRY SHAPE-SHIFTING AGAIN?

.....



REALLY?!
EH?!
WAIT, MISAKI!
JUMP
WAI--
GOOD...
SHOOO
Huh?
YOU MEAN HE CHANGES WHEN YOU KISS HIM?
TWIST
LET ME DO IT!
C'MON! YOU ALWAYS GET TO DO IT!
TWIST
LET ME KISS HIM!!
Ooh!
I WANNA DO IT!
Ooh!
Ooh!
Ooh!!
SANAE-CHAN?
NAH... THE KISS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
IT'S ONLY BECAUSE THAT'S THE MOMENT WHEN HE FEELS MOST LIKE HE'S NOT ALONE.
Smile

WHAP
MOVE!
GYAH!
SO THAT TIME BEFORE...
Hmm
C'MON! I'VE ONLY DONE IT ONCE!
TWIST
THAT FEELING BEFORE...
AHHH!!
MMMM
IF THAT'S SO, I HAVEN'T EVEN DONE IT ONCE YET!
WELL...
PLEASE?!
TWIST
WHAT WAS THAT?!
IF YOU THINK I'M LETTING YOU DO IT, YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER THING COMING!
Umh!
SMACK
WHAT'S WITH THESE GIRLS?
sigh
HA HA
I ASKED FIRST!
A CRIMINAL LIKE YOU HAS NO RIGHT TO TALK!
YOU THINK A GIRL FROM A RICH AND FAMOUS FAMILY CAN GET AWAY WITH ANYTHING SHE WANTS?
KNOCK IT OFF!!
ME FIRST!
YOU'RE JUST A KID!

THEN LET'S LET NEO PICK!
THAT'S THE BEST WAY!
AGREE!
WHAT?!
.....
MMNN
THUMP
TH-THUMP
Hmm
TH-THUMP
CHOOSE!
.....
SMIRK
CHU
CHU
!
CHU

!!
BU
KA

Smile

GUT
GUT
GUT
GUT
GUT
DEKI
BAKI
GOKI GOKI
UH..
CROK
SHHHHHP
SHHHP
WOW!
SHHHP

BLINK
POKU!
SWISHH
SHING
NEO!
MY NOSE IS BLEEDING

IS NEO TALKING?
HUH?!
UH...
SH AKE
HEY!
ACHOO!
HE'LL TALK EVENTUALLY.
DON'T WORRY.
FOR A MOMENT THERE, I THOUGHT NEO WAS GOING TO TALK.
SHAKE
OH... SORRY.
ISN'T THAT GREAT, NEO? YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TALK!
SHIVER
WE'LL HAVE TO REWRAP THE BANDAGE.
.....?
I THINK THE ONLY REASON HE DOESN'T IS THAT HE'S LIVED HIS WHOLE LIFE IN THE LAKE.
I'LL GET HIM SOME CLOTHES.
REALLY?!

Hee Hee hee!
STOP!
CUT IT OUT!
.....
OKAY, OKAY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO SNUGGLE THAT MUCH.
SNUGGLE
I CAN'T WRAP THE BANDAGE
SNUGGLE
STARE
?!
THUMP
.....
HE WANTS US ALL TO BE TOGETHER.
EH?!
WELL, JUST THIS ONCE.
Heh heh heh
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT ...
JUST ONCE.

THE ONLY UNDERWEAR WE HAVE IS MINE
WH
YOUR NOSE IS BLEEDING
THAT'S OKAY
AAN-TIE!
HMM...
HE SEEMS CALM AS LONG AS PEOPLE ARE AROUND.
AT LEAST HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS.
FWOOSH
WOOSH
FWOOSH
GIK
GIK
GIK
GIK

KREE
KREE
OKAY, STOP! NOW TAKE OFF THE HOOK.
OKAY!
WREEE
C'MON BACK!
C'MON BACK!
OF COURSE NOT!
ISN'T THIS ALL A LITTLE TOO MUCH?
SAWAKI...
WELL, WHAT D'YA THINK? THIS IS THE BOAT AND SUBMERSIBLE THAT THE SYNDICATE PROCURED FOR US.
THEY SAY LAKE HOHORO IS 280 METERS DEEP IN SOME SPOTS.
THE SHAPE OF THE LAKEBED IS VERY COMPLEX. THE LAVA FLOWS CUT DEEP TROUGHS WITH DOZENS OF CAVES.
THERE'S STILL A LOT OF THINGS NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT THIS LAKE.
THAT'S WHY THERE ARE LEGENDS.

I GOT FOOLED BACK THEN.
...WAS AFTER A CERTAIN PROFESSOR MOVED TO THIS TOWN.
WHEN I LOOKED INTO IT, THE FIRST TIME ANYBODY WITNESSED A HOHOPO ...
SORT OF NESSIE.
DON'T YOU KNOW? THE HOHOPO.
LEGENDS?
... THAT IT WAS A DINOSAUR.
NO ONE EVER DREAMED ...
heh heh heh
I'M TELLING EVERYONE THAT THIS IS ALL PART OF THE NEW EXHIBIT WE'RE ABOUT TO OPEN.
DON'T WORRY, IT'LL BE FINE.
...BUT I DON'T KNOW IF ATTRACTING ATTENTION IN A SMALL TOWN LIKE THIS IS SUCH A GOOD IDEA.
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH A LITTLE CREATURE LIKE THAT IS WORTH ...
.....
KREE
KREE

!
...YOUR COMPANY IS SPONSORING THIS ENTIRE PROJECT.
BY THE WAY...
AND ANYWAY, WE NEED THIS STUFF TO BRING UP THE GOLD.
HMM
IF WE WERE REALLY TRYING TO CAPTURE A LEGENDARY CREATURE, HAVING ALL THIS EQUIPMENT IS ONLY NATURAL.
WE WON'T ANNOUNCE THIS UNLESS WE DO ACTUALLY CATCH IT.
PREPARE TO CAST OFF!
WELL, YOU DIDN'T THINK A SMALL MUSEUM WOULD BE ABLE TO AFFORD ALL THIS, DID YOU?
WH--
THE...?
WHAT
?!
WE GOT A PROBLEM!
CL
UNK
WHAT IS IT?!
ALL RIGHT, LET'S GO!

WHAT ?!!
THE TRACKING BEACON SIGNAL HAS STOPPED!
EVEN IF IT DID, THE SIGNAL WOULDN'T STOP AS LONG AS IT'S IN THE WATER.
MAYBE IT WENT IN ONE OF THOSE CAVES YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT
WHAM
WHAT THE BLAZES HAPPENED ?! HAVEN'T YOU BEEN MONITORING THE SIGNAL ?!
I WAS, BUT SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE, THE SIGNAL JUST STOPPED SUDDENLY!
AH!
THAT'S IT!
A CAVE MUST BE CONNECTED TO THE SURFACE SOMEWHERE!

AH...THAT BASEMENT ROOM...!!!
UGH!
THAT'S GOTTA BE IT!!
CLAP
ZZZZZ
ZZZZZ
CREAK
POP
POP
ZZZZZ

I CALLED MISAKI AND SANAE'S FAMILIES, BUT WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT TOKUKO?
AH, YES. THE POOR LITTLE RICH GIRL.
THEY MUST BE WORRIED ABOUT HER.
ARE THEY ALL ASLEEP?
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY CAN SLEEP ALL PILED UP LIKE THAT.
GLUG
BEER
AFTER ALL, SHE'S BEEN KIDNAPPED ONCE.
IF YOU KNOW SO MUCH, WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL MISAKI ABOUT IT SOONER?
BY THE WAY, YOU GUYS SEEM AWFULLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE BOY.
BEEP BEEP BEEP
AND THAT'S NOT ALL.
WHEN I RESCUED YOU OUT BY THE LAKE, IT WASN'T UNTIL I FOUND SOME CHILDREN'S FOOTPRINTS THAT I REALIZED THE BOY WAS THE ONE THAT PROFESSOR OTORI LOST.
THEY'LL COME DASHING OUT HERE TO COME GET HER.
SHOULD I CALL?
THE ONLY PLACE THEY COULD BE STAYING AROUND HERE IS THE LAKESIDE HOTEL.

A REASON TO KEEP QUIET.
?
WE HAD GOOD REASON FOR IT.
THIS IS MY LUCKY DAY!
HEE HEE HEE
TONIGHT, I'LL BE ALL ALONE WITH KYOICHI.
LA LA LA
ZAT
ZAT
ZAT
HUH?
OH, NO.
NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS WAIT FOR KYOICHI TO GET OUT OF THE BATH.
HOPE HE HURRIES UP!
FWUP
KLIK
OH, NO.

I'M NOT LEAVING UNTIL YOU SHOW IT TO ME!
I KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT THING YOU CREATED WITH MY GRAND-FATHER!
YES!
YOU MEAN THE LITTLE BASEMENT ROOM OFF THE TOILET?
BASEMENT ROOM?
Ten years ago.
CREAK
?!
SEE?
BUT IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK, SAHAKI-KUN.
I SUPPOSE IT IS A CURIOUS LITTLE PLACE.
HO HO HO HO
NO, I'M SATISFIED.
KLAK
KLAK
.....!!
SATISFIED NOW?
FWOOOSH

GACHAK
CLOMP
WHAM
?!
MMPH!
MPH!
DA
GYAH!!
DA
DA
HMM...
I'LL GET THAT THING NO MATTER WHAT!
BAM
HUH?
WHAT?!
FLAP

CHAPTER 15

THE TINY DIFFERENCE

STILL NOT TALKING?
.....
LOOK.
THERE'S A CRIME ORGANIZATION INVOLVED IN THIS.
IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT SAWAKI'S LOOKING FOR, AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PROTECTING FROM THEM, I CAN'T HELP YOU.
WHAT REASON FOR NOT TELLING MISAKI?
.....
WHAT REASON?
ZZZZ
ZZZZ
SIMPLY PUT, IT'S A LARGE CRIMINAL SYNDICATE.
FROM MURDER TO EXTORTION
...THEY'RE HUGE.

THERE'S A RUMOR THAT THEY HAVE SOME CONNECTIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT.
SIGH
SO THERE'S NOTHING THE COPS CAN DO.
FOR ALL THE HUGE INFLUENCE THEY HAVE, NOBODY KNOWS TOO MUCH ABOUT THEM.
MOSTLY, THEY JUST TAKE REQUESTS FROM CLIENTS AND INTRODUCE THEM TO THE APPROPRIATE STAFF.
IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE WILLING TO DO WHATEVER NASTINESS IT TAKES TO GET THEIR HANDS ON THE BOY.
AND A LOT OF MONEY IS INVOLVED.
AT ANY RATE, IF THIS SYNDICATE IS INVOLVED, THEN OUR OPPONENTS MUST BE PROS.
?!
WAH!
BOOT

MM...
MMM!
AOI-SAN!
KA-PU
HE SAVED MY LIFE ONCE. I WANT TO DO WHATEVER I CAN TO PROTECT HIM.
SO IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU'RE HIDING, TELL ME NOW.
?!
he he he he
RREK
WH--
WHAT ARE ...?

.....
IT'S HARD FOR MY BROTHER TO TALK ABOUT IT, SO I'LL TELL YOU.
.....
Smile
SUZU!
THE TRUTH IS...
...THAT BOY ISN'T THE ONLY ONE.
.....!!

IF ALL ELSE FAILS, WE HAVE HOSTAGES THAT WE CAN GET INFORMATION OUT OF.
POST ONE GUY HERE TO STAND GUARD.
THE REST, COME WITH ME.
SLAM
IS THAT EVERYBODY?
OKAY.
SHIVER
SHIVER
DON'T KILL THEM UNTIL WE'VE GOT WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
!!!
IF THEY TRY TO GET OUT, I'LL CUT 'EM.
LEAVE 'EM TO ME.
LICK
WHAM
THUMP
GWHP
GOT IT! HEH HEH HEH HEH
GLOP
GLOP
GLOP

HMM ...
IT'S COMPLETELY EMPTY.
JUST LIKE IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO.
HEH HEH HEH
RIGHT HERE.
BREAK IT DOWN.
OKAY!
SMIRK
CREAK
HEH!
CREAK
THAT MEANS ...
TAP
TAP
TAP TAP
BOK
BOK

CRACK
CLANG
BEEP
HEH HEH
CRACK
CRACK
TAP
TAP
H...
BEEP
AL-- ALL RIGHT.
IT'S POSSIBLE IT'LL TRY TO ESCAPE THROUGH THE LAKE, SO KEEP A SHARP EYE OUT.
WE'LL GO IN FROM HERE.
IT LOOKS LIKE WE FOUND THE ENTRANCE TO THE CAVE.
HELLO, ASAI.

ZA T
ZA T
ZA T
FLASH
ALL RIGHT! LET'S GO!
CLICK
CRUMBLE
CRACK
FLIP
MOTHER...
SHH
SHH
UM...
UMM...
SHH

HUH?
CLUNK
MOTHER...
KNOCK
SHH
SHH
SHH
.....
WHEN DID WE FALL ASLEEP?
SNUGGLE
SNUGGLE
YAAWN
heh
SLIP
SHHHH

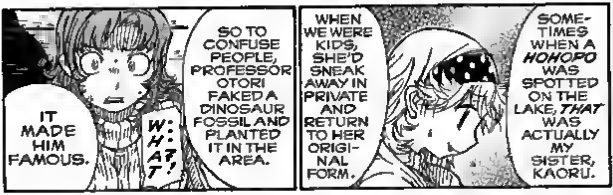
WNAOY!
?
CLACK
DON'T WORRY, I'M JUST A LITTLE THIRSTY.
SNIFF
AH!
.....

KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN!
MISAKI AND THE KIDS WILL HEAR YOU!
YOU MEAN THAT YOU TWO CAN SHAPE-SHIFT, TOO?!
YOU MEAN...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN THAT BOY ISN'T THE ONLY ONE?!

THEN WHAT ABOUT YOU?!
PRO-FESSOR OTORI JUST ASKED HIM TO HIDE EVERY-THING.
MY BROTH-ER CAN'T DO IT.
.....?!!

WELL... YES.
I AM LIKE THAT BOY.
I WAS BORN FROM AN EGG JUST LIKE HIM.
.....
AND THERE WAS ANOTHER
I'M YOUR REAL BIG SISTER.
SHH,
Smile
PLEASED TO MEET YOU.

WHAT?!


SOMETIMES WHEN A HOHOPO WAS SPOTTED ON THE LAKE, THAT WAS ACTUALLY MY SISTER, KAORU.
WHEN WE WERE KIDS, SHE'D SNEAK AWAY IN PRIVATE AND RETURN TO HER ORIGINAL FORM.
SO TO CONFUSE PEOPLE, PROFESSOR OTORI FAKED A DINOSAUR FOSSIL AND PLANTED IT IN THE AREA.
W-WHAT?
IT MADE HIM FAMOUS.

MY MOTHER...
...SHE'S LIKE NEO?!
CAN CHANGE SHAPE...
IF YOU
WHY DIDN'T YOU GO OUT AND GET THAT BOY A LONG TIME AGO?!
IT'S TOO LATE.
ONCE I PASSED PUBERTY...

WHAT?
I DON'T KNOW IF I'M HAPPY OR SAD.
...
MY BONES GREW HARDER, AND EVENTUALLY I COULDN'T CHANGE ANY-MORE.
AND THEN ...
...
SAWAKI STARTED SEARCH-ING ALL OVER.
SAWAKI KNOWS WHY WE REALLY BROUGHT THESE GIRLS INTO THE WORLD
BUT... HE'S NOT HUMAN.
THAT'S WHY I'LL NEVER LET HIM GET THEM.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
DON'T EVER TELL MISAKI.
I COULD NEVER TELL HER SOME-THING LIKE THIS!

ZAT
WHO'S THERE?
FLIP
FLIP
FLIP
FLIP
TWITCH
GRAK
!
.....?!
?
JUST MY IMAG-INA-TION?
ZOKU
?!
TH
AGH!
WAP
OARN!
SHUUP
WHOOSH

GA CHA
?!
?!
CLIC
OPEN IT.
UG CK!
STOMP
FMM...
FMMM..
.....
WHERE IS MISTRESS TOKUKO?
SLIP
CREAK...
.....
MISAKI-CHAN?
tzuu?
ZZZ
ZZ
MN...
ZZZ

?!
.....
CLUTCH
MISAKI!!
CHAN! MISAKI-
IS IT TRUE?
WHAT YOU JUST SAID?
IS IT TRUE THAT MY MOTHER AND SUZU-SAN ARE THE SAME AS NEO?
LOOK, MISAKI-CHAN...
SHUDDER
DON'T!
SO YOU HEARD?
?!

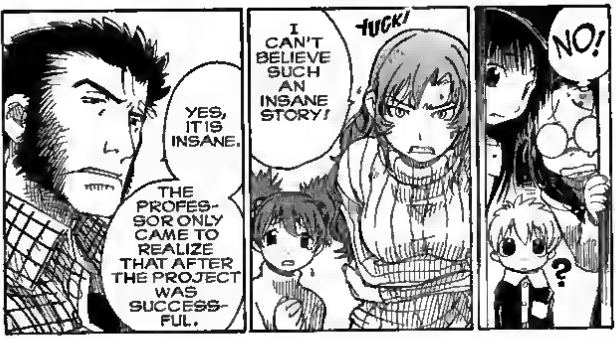
HUH, WHAT'S UP?
SHH...
MISAKI-CHAN...
DON'T TOUCH ME.
YOU'RE TOTALLY DIFFERENT!
WE'RE NOT ANY DIFFERENT!
BUT APART FROM THAT WE'RE COMPLETELY HUMAN!
IT'S TRUE THAT SISTER KAORU AND I ARE LIKE NEO. IT'S TRUE WE WERE BORN FROM EGGS, AND WHEN WE WERE BORN WE HAD A SHAPE LIKE A DINOSAUR.
AM I SUPPOSE TO SAY, "OH, REALLY?" AND FORGET ABOUT IT?
AND NOW, SUDDENLY YOU TELL ME MY MOTHER'S NOT HUMAN.
I LOVE MY MOTHER. AND I LOVE NEO.
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

I CAN'T DO THAT!
WHAT HAPPENS TO ME, HER DAUGHTER?!
DOES THIS MEAN I'M HALF HUMAN? THAT I CAN CHANGE INTO A CREATURE?
DOES THAT MEAN I'M SOME KIND OF MONSTER?!
SLAP
?!
YAH!
SLUMP
FUUHIKO!

WHAT WAS THAT ?!
IT'S JUST THE LIKE PROFESSOR SAID.
WHAT DID YOU HIT HER FOR ?!
YOU CAN'T BURY THE TINY DIFFERENCE.
EVEN IF YOUR DNA IS 99.9% THE SAME AS A HUMAN...
...IF YOU LOOK DIFFERENT, YOU DON'T COUNT AS A HUMAN.
EVEN IF YOU FEEL LIKE A HUMAN ...
...IT DOESN'T COUNT.
...?
WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?
HOW DO YOU LIVE WITH IT?
AY
A-A
WN

IT'S A VAST, BUT TINY DIFFERENCE.
.....
.....
AND THESE CHILDREN WERE BORN IN ORDER TO DIE IN THE PLACE OF HUMANS.
?!
WHAT ?!
THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE WAS FOR ORGAN TRANS-PLANTS.
IT WAS TO FILL THE NEED FOR HUMAN ORGANS FOR MEDICAL REPLACE-MENT.
I'VE HEARD IT WAS DEVELOPED IN SECRET BY MEDICAL RESEARCH FIRMS UNDER GOVERN-MENT CONTROL.

THEY WERE AIMING TO MAKE EXACTLY THE SAME ORGANS NEEDED BY HUMANS ...
...BUT THEY HAD OUTWARD APPEAR-ANCES THAT WERE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM HUMANS.
THE GROUP OF SCIENTISTS AT THE TIME WAS MANIPULATING HUMAN GENES WITH CUTTING EDGE TECH-NOLOGY.
ONLY THE OUTSIDE WOULD LOOK DIFFER-ENT.
THAT WAS THE GOAL THEY SOUGHT TO REACH.
G C A T G C A A
A U G C
A C


YES, IT IS INSANE.
THE PROFES-SOR ONLY CAME TO REALIZE THAT AFTER THE PROJECT WAS SUCCESS-FUL.
I CAN'T BELIEVE SUCH AN INSANE STORY!
FUCK!
NO!
?

I'VE DECIDED TO KEEP THE RESULTS A SECRET.
TO LET THESE CHILDREN LIVE AS HUMANS, I'LL THINK OF A WAY FOR THEM TO RETURN TO HUMAN FORM.
WHEN I THINK OF THE FEELINGS OF THESE CREATURES WHO WERE BORN ONLY TO DIE...
TO THINK IT'S OKAY TO TAKE ITS LIFE JUST BECAUSE IT LOOKS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT...
THERE WERE THREE EMBRYOS CAPABLE OF CHANGING TO HUMAN FORM.
THE PROFESSOR TOOK THESE AND CAME TO THIS VILLAGE, WHERE A FORMER STUDENT OF HIS LIVED-- MY MOTHER.
AND THAT'S THE ENTIRE TRUTH.

ORGANS FOR TRANS-PLANT...
IS THAT WHAT THAT GUY SAWAKI IS REALLY AFTER?
YES.
ACCORDING TO ESTIMATES IN THE U.S., THE ORGAN MARKET IS WORTH SIXTY MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR.
SAWAKI PLANS TO SELL THE RESEARCH TO SOME VENTURE CAPITAL GROUP FOR A LOT OF MONEY.
AT THE TIME THE PROFESSOR HID HIS PROJECT, IT WAS JUST A THEORET-ICAL POSSIBIL-ITY.
NOW IT'S A GLOBAL INDUS-TRY.
EVEN IF IT'S ILLEGAL IN JAPAN, THERE ARE PLENTY OF COUNTRIES THAT ARE INTERESTED IN IT.
I SEE...
EVEN IF IT COSTS 240 MILLION YEN TO GET, IT'S WELL WORTH IT...
THAT BOY'S IN DANGER!
ZAT
ZAT
ZAT

ZA
HEH HEH HEH HEH
T
WHY DO YOU THINK THEY NEVER TOLD YOU ANY-THING?
THE PROFES-SOR AND YOUR MOTHER KEPT YOU AWAY FROM THIS TOWN FOR TEN YEARS.
!!!!
MISAKI.
GASP
THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE HOPING FOR.
IT WAS SO YOU COULD LIVE YOUR LIFE AS A NORMAL HUMAN BEING, WITHOUT KNOWING.

IF YOU EXISTED AS A HUMAN BORN AMONG HUMANS ...
...IT WAS LIKE PROOF THAT THEY THEMSELVES WERE HUMAN, TOO.
YOU ARE *HOPE* ITSELF.
YOU, *MISAKI*.
EVEN WITH ALL THAT, DO YOU STILL CALL YOURSELF A MONSTER?
WHAT SHOULD WE DO? SHOULD WE GO OUT THERE?
SHIVER
OR SHOULD WE PRETEND LIKE WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING FOR MISAKI'S SAKE?
I--I DON'T ...

!
♫
WH
KYAH!
A
M
BUMP
AH...
HA
HA
HA
HA
YOU GUYS!
OH... MISAKI
TOTTER
TOTTER
TOTTER
HA
HA
WE DIDN'T MEAN TO.
HA
DID YOU HEAR?
IT SEEMED KINDA SERIOUS, SO WE DIDN'T WANT TO DISTURB.

HUG
!

THAT'S THE SOUND OF NEO'S HEART
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP
.....

NEO IS STILL NEO... THAT HASN'T CHANGED.
I GUESS I DREW A LINE SOME-WHERE, TOO.
HE'S JUST THE SAME AS ME...
THE TINY DIFFER-ENCE ...
THUMP
THUMP

SQUEEZE
Heh heh
.....
MISAKI-CHAN...
SAWAKI DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE SHAPE-SHIFTING, DOES HE?
NO.
THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD KNOW.
THAT'S GOTTA BE TRUE. IF HE DID, HE WOULD'VE COME STRAIGHT HERE.
AS LONG AS NEO STAYS IN HUMAN FORM, HE'S SAFE. BUT THAT SAWAKI IS RELENTLESS. WE BETTER BE CAREFUL.
BY THE WAY, ARE YOU TWO A COUPLE?
SHOCK
TWITCH
CHIKA
CHIKA
.....
HM...

GRR
GRR
WHAT IS IT, TARO?
GRR
DI DONG
BAM
BAM
BAM
!
WHAT ...?
GRR
THE DOOR! SAN! OPEN FUYUHIKO!
BAM
BAM
OPEN UP!
OPEN THE DOOR!
BAM
GRR
BAM
IS THAT AOI-SAN?
GRR
GRR
AND THAT'S DAD'S VOICE, TOO.

BATAN
Click
PEKO
AND NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
SHP
Click
SIR? IS THAT A GOOD IDEA?
TELLING THE POLICE WHERE TOKUKO-SAN HAS GONE TO...
THE SYNDICATE IS VALUABLE PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS MYSTERIOUS
TAK
THE MYSTERY ITSELF IS THE SOURCE OF IT'S POWER.
EVEN IF MY OWN SON-IN-LAW TRIES TO USE MY BELOVED GRANDDAUGHTER TO CHEAT ME OUT OF MONEY.
IT'S NO USE TRYING TO DECEIVE THEM WITH PETTY TRICKS.

TERAUCHI IS ON THE SCENE.
NO NEED TO WORRY.
WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
BLUB BLUB
EVERY-THING IS UNDER CONTROL.

CHAPTER 16

THE LOCATION OF THE GOLD

DAD?
DAD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
GASP
THIS MAN, TERAUCHI, HAPPENED TO COME BY AND SAVE US.
OTHER-WISE, I DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAP-PENED.
REAL-LY?
WE'VE GOT BIG TROU-BLE! A BUNCH OF STRANGE MEN BURST INTO THE HOUSE AND LOCKED US IN THE CLOSET!
WE CAN'T HAVE YOU RUN-NING OUT ALONE.
WHY DID HE HAVE TO SHOW UP?
SHI-VER. SHIVER.
DARN!
I'VE BEEN SEARCH-ING FOR YOU, MIS-TRESS.
WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING, TERA-UCHI?

I DIDN'T PLAN ON THIS.
IF ONLY I COULD FOOL THEM A LITTLE LONGER ...
BROTHER! DO YOU THINK ...?
YEAH. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
GRIT
IT'S HIM!
TO GET WHAT HE WANTS, HE'LL DO ANYTHING HE HAS TO!
.....?!
!
HUH?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "HIM?"
SAWAKI.
I'LL TELL YOU THE REST LATER.

REAL-LY?
SA-SA-WAK!?
AND IF IT'S NOT TRUE, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY GET HERE.
THIS PLACE IS DANGER-OUS.
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
YOU ALL NEED TO GET TO A SAFE PLACE.
WITH THE TRACER BEACON, HE MUST HAVE FIGURED OUT ABOUT THE CAVE.
KACHAK
AND THE FAKE WALL IN THAT BASE-MENT ROOM.
KA
CHAK
I'M GONNA HAVE A LITTLE TALK WITH THAT GUY.
GRU
BAM!
TARO, LET'S GO!
BUT... BUT WHERE'S A SAFE PLACE?
A...A
TALK?!

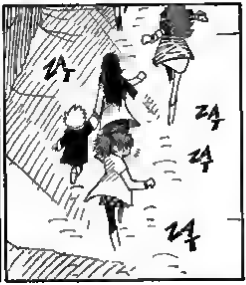
TARO!
GRR
GRR
GRR
WHAT IS IT?
LEAP
WH--
UH...
WHAT DO WE DO, SUZU?
SLAM
HE'S GONE.
CHAK
BAM

WE RESERVED THE ENTIRE BUILDING, SO THERE ARE PLENTY OF ROOMS.
...ALLOW ME TO SUGGEST THE HOTEL WHERE WE ARE STAYING.
!
IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A PLACE OF SAFETY...
HEY, THAT'S RIGHT!
MY SECURITY GUARDS WILL PROTECT US!
YEAH! THAT'S A GOOD IDEA!
?!
EH?
JOLT
YOU'D BETTER COME, TOO. HURRY!
WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE THEY DON'T KNOW MY SECRET YET.
DOKA
DOKA
C'MON! LET'S GET GOING!

HURRY!
SOME-THING FEELS WRONG!
BUT THAT OLD MAN...!

THE SUN IS RISING.

MISAKI CHAN?


ZA
ZA
ZA
ZA

ZAT
ZAT

ZA
T
DARN!
IT'S LIKE A MAZE!
ZA
T
ZA
T
SEE ANY-THING OVER THERE?
SPLASH
WOOSH
NOTHING HERE, EITHER!
JUST SHUT UP AND DO WHAT YOU'RE TOLD!
THE ORGAN BUSINESS WILL COME! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!
ARE WE REALLY GONNA MAKE A FORTUNE DOING THIS?
THERE'S GOTTA BE A PATH IN HERE! FIND IT!
ZA
T
ZAT
HEY!

HA HA HA HA HA!
NOBODY WILL CARE WHAT SACRIFICES NEEDED TO BE MADE!
EVERYBODY'S ORGANS FAIL EVENTUALLY!
THEY'LL BE GRATEFUL TO US!
ZU ZA T
?!
THIS GUY'S NUTS!
TCH!
HA HA HA HA!
AAAAAA
KARAK
ZA
ZA
ZA
H-HEY ...
HELP!

LET'S KEEP GOING!
LEAVE HIM!
WHAT?! AREN'T WE GONNA HELP?!
KARAK
Tch!
HE'S GONE!
KARAK
HEY! ARE YOU OKAY?!
HEY! ARE YOU OKAY?!
SHAA
LET'S KEEP GOING!
SHUT UP AND MOVE!
WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO SAVE SOME FOOL WHO CAN'T WATCH WHERE HE'S GOING!
CLOP
FIND IT!
FIND IT NOW!
FLASH
SOMETHING'S MOVING OUT THERE!
WHAT WAS THAT?!

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
ZAT
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
SHH!
BEEP
QUIET!
KICH
PAT
GIMME THAT POUCH!
BEEP
GIMME THAT!
BEEP
!
BEEP
BEEP
PANK

BEEP
HEH.
HEH HEH HEH HEH
BEEP
THAT'S THE TRACER BEACON !!
IT! THAT'S
THIS WAY!
ZA
A
A
A
A
?!

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
ZA
A
A
WHAT DO WE DO? IT'S TOO DEEP TO CROSS.
A DEAD END?!
GRAB
NO!
NO-BODY'S GOING BACK!
THAT'S IT! THERE'S NOTHING HERE!
NOW WE GO BACK!
CRASH
DARN!
WHERE'S THAT VOICE COMING FROM
?!
SAWAKI ...
WHO'S THAT ?!

YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG IDEA.
ZA
A
THE THING PROFESSOR OTORI LEFT BEHIND ...
IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
BANDO!! ARE YOU ...?!
A
APPOINTED. DIS- ONLY BE YOU'LL
A
A
GIVE IT UP LIKE A MAN AND GO HOME.
HA HA HA!
ZA
WHY WOULD I BELIEVE YOU?!
FORGET ABOUT IT.
THAT THING-- IT'S MINE!!
THE TRANSPLANT ORGAN RESEARCH WAS DONE BY MY GRANDFATHER!
INHERITANCE' A RIGHT TO MY I HAVE
AND YOU'RE NOT STOPPING ME!
.....
THIS ISN'T ABOUT RIGHTS.

GO
GO
GO
GO
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?
WHAT IS IT?
ZA
A
A
BANDO? ARE YOU WHERE
COME OUT AND FACE ME!!
GO
GO
LET'S FINISH THIS NOW!
THE... WATER FALL!
ZA
A
A
Z!
STOPPING! IT'S
DRIBBLE
DRIBBLE
WHAT?!
Z!
D'DO DO DO
Z!
ZA
DO
ZA
ZA

DA
PA
AH
AH
AHHH
ZA
SA
ZURU
SLASH
GAH!
GAH!
GAH!

ZA
SPLISH
A
!!!
INSIDE THIS CAVE...
ZA
T
SLOSH
SLOSH
TO MAKE IT EASIER TO WALK AROUND ...
... THERE ARE A COUPLE OF PLACES YOU CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE STREAM.
SPLISH
SPLASH
ZA
THE THING YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ISN'T HERE.
THERE'S NOTHING DOWN HERE FOR YOU TO FIND.
A
DAMN YOU, BANDO!
THIS IS ONE OF THEM.
TOO BAD FOR YOU, SAWAKI.
SLOSH

DON'T BE STUPID, SAWAKI.
GU
GI
ZA A A
...I'LL HELP YOU AND YOUR MEN.
IF YOU PROMISE TO FORGET THE PROFESSOR'S RESEARCH, AND NEVER COME TO THIS TOWN AGAIN...
AH!
SLOSH
GRIP
HEH!
WHO DO YOU ...
ZA A A
FALL IN, AND EVEN THE STRONGEST MAN WILL ONLY LAST A FEW HOURS.
HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HOLD ON?
IN THIS SEASON, THE WATER TEMPERATURE IS ONLY ABOUT 45 DEGREES
.....!!
THAT SON OF A...
GRAB
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.
ZA
I'M NOT LYING!
A A
W-WAIT!
I SWEAR!
I SWEAR!
GASP
I'LL BE BACK IN TWO HOURS.
SLOSH
?!
HUH?!
SLAM

CRUNCH
REAL-LY?
REAL-LY!
C'MON, HURRY!
GRIP
NOW PULL ME UP!
AHH!
I'LL EVEN GIVE YOU THE PHOTO I TOOK AT PROFESSOR OTORI'S HOUSE!
I'LL GIVE YOU ALL MY GRANDFATHER'S RESEARCH NOTES!
SLOSH
GRIP
IF YOU'RE LYING, I'LL BLOW YOUR FACE OFF.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GONNA GET HIS FACE BLOWN OFF!
YOU PIECE O' CRUD!
SLOSH
?!
WAIT!
HIT ME, YOU'LL
huff
huff
huff
YOU'RE GONNA DIE HERE!
YOU MISERABLE PIECE O'
DIE!!

CHO
ROWF
MP
POW
AHH!!
SLOSH
TARO!
PHEEEEW
AHHHH
TARO!!
GRIN

BWA HA HA HA HA!
HA HA HA HA HA
ZA A A
YOU'RE GOING, TOO!
UGH!
LOOKS LIKE I'VE GOT THE LAST LAUGH!
DARN!
SPLASH
SPLASH
UGH!

HOHORO LAKESIDE HOTEL
WHAT IS IT?
NEO?!
WHY'S THAT THING HERE?
HUH? A BOAT?
.....
WHAT'S THAT?
?!

SAWAKI HAS A BOAT HERE, AS PART OF THE PLAN!
THAT'S IT!
ZA
A MINI-SUB?
AND HE'S EVEN GOT A MINI-SUB.
NE O!
COME WITH ME, BOY!
GRAB
?!
?!
SAN?
AI-
?
?
DASH

THAT'S IT!
THAT'S MY GOAL!
THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOTTA DO!
WAIT!
WHERE'S REIKO GOING?!
.....!!
I KNEW YOU'D BE-TRAY US!
glare
FUJIKAWA REIKO!
!
SNOW
?!

WHUMP
VROOM
GADDA GADDA
OH!
LET'S GO!
HOLD ON TIGHT, KID!
VROO
M

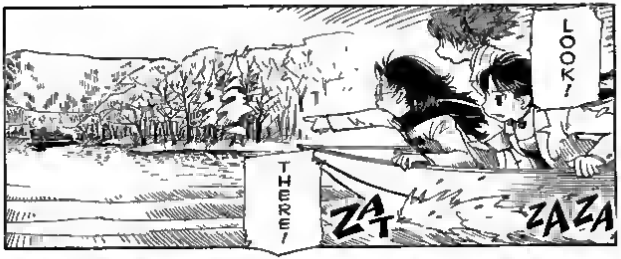
AH!
WHAM
WHAT WAS THAT?!
VROOM
I CAN'T HANG AROUND IN THIS TOWN FOREVER...
PACE
PACE
PACE
LATE-THEY'RE STILL NO CON-TACT YET?
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
OWW!
YOU ALL RIGHT, KID?
SA
LASH

OKAY.
THAT'S GOOD.
HEY!
CLANG CLANG
CLOMP
CLOMP
WH--IT'S YOU!!
?!
ASA!
SAN!
YOU CAME HERE?!
ALIVE?! STILL YOU'RE
SHOULD-N'T I BE?
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON THIS BOAT, ANY-WAY?
WELL ... I...
YOU GUYS COMPLETELY SCREWED UP THE JOB!!
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT KID?!
WHAT?
OH, YOU MEAN HIM?
?
THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT GUEST, WHO'S GOING TO BRING US GREAT FORTUNE.
WHAT?

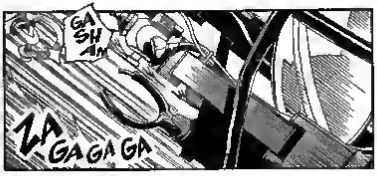
THE GOLD!
SQUEEZE
!
THIS KID IS GONNA TAKE US TO IT!!
NEO!
ZAT
NEO!
ZAT
ZA
ZA
!
SHIVER
TURN
TURN
WHAT DO I DO?!
WHAT DO I DO?

GAH!
ROCK
OCK
ROCK
SPLASH
SPLASH
huff
huff
MISAKI-CHAN!
DASH
huff
huff
KEEP GOING, KYOICHI-SAN!
huff
huff
pant
pant
THESE KIDS ARE FAST!
THANKS!
SHOW ME HOW TO START THIS!
TAP
I'M COMING WITH YOU!
MISAKI-CHAN!
SANAE-CHAN!
TOKUKO-CHAN!
huff
AND YOU DON'T KNOW, DO YOU, SANAE-CHAN?
huff
YOU DON'T KNOW EITHER?!
HUH?

GAN GAN GAN
WHEN DID YOU ...?
TERA-UCHI?!
ZKKANN
LET'S GO!
GRIP
OKAY!
PLEASE HOLD ON TIGHT.
THIS WILL BE BUMPY!
PHEW
YOU REALLY ARE A HANDFUL, MISTRESS.
NEO!
GAN GAN GAN GAN
MISAKI-CHAN!
MISAKI!


LOOK!
THERE!
ZA
ZA ZA

WHEEEEZ


GA SH AM
ZA GA GA GA

OKAY. GET IN. ♡
CLANK
REIKO! FUJIKAWA

Millcreek-Col
ZAPA
T

MISAKI-CHAN AND SANAE-CHAN...
TOKUKO-SAN?!
!
GAH GAH GAH GAH
ZAP AT
NEO!
CLOP CLOP
SHOCK
AH!
T-TOKUKO?!
WHAT'S UP?
DON'T YOU "WHAT'S UP" ME!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
AND WHY DID YOU TAKE NEO?
HUG
AND ONLY THIS LITTLE FELLOW KNOWS WHERE IT IS. ♡
I NEED TO PICK UP SOME-THING I LOST.
OOOH, THAT. WELL...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "OOOH?"

FINAL CHAPTER

BORN ON THIS EARTH

SOMETHING YOU LOST?!
THAT'S RIGHT.
DON'T WORRY. I'M NOT GOING TO DRAG HIM AWAY AND EAT HIM.
THIS IS THE ONLY THING I NEED TO DO.
IT'S THE ONLY THING I CAN DO.
BECAUSE I'M A BAD WOMAN.
PLEASE... TRUST ME JUST THIS ONCE.
I TRUSTED YOU... ONCE BEFORE...
SEE YOU LATER!
AHH!
KREEK
WAIT!
SMIRK
PONK
PUSH

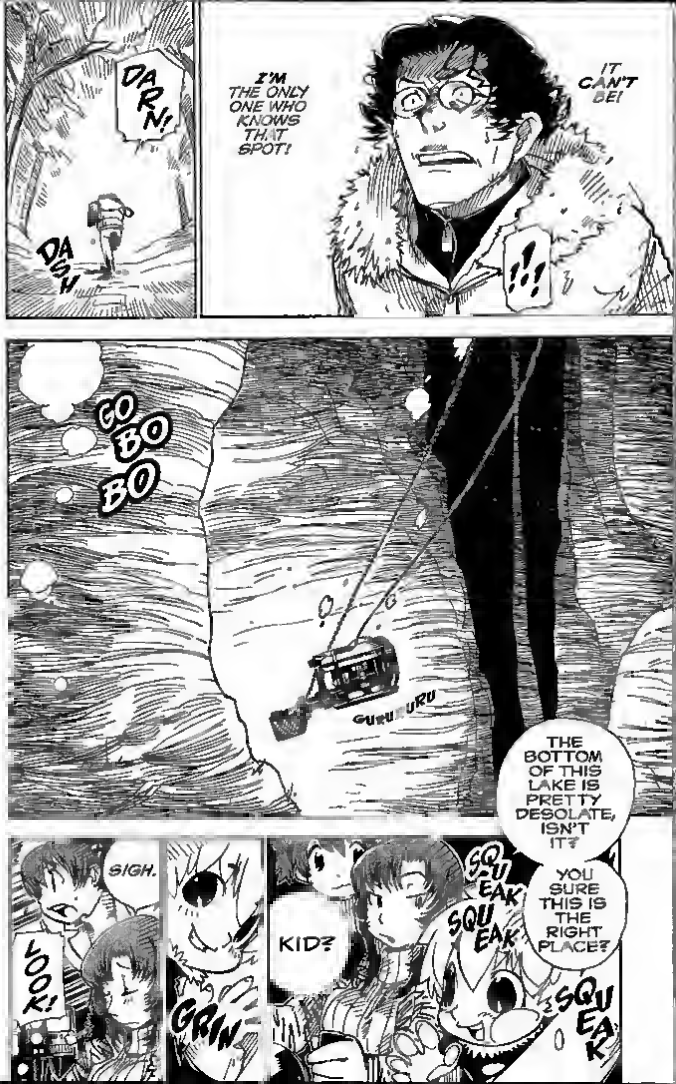
GAN GAN
GAN
DON'T JUST SIT THERE, TERA-UCHI! DO...
Huh?
TERA-UCHI?
GAN
GAN
.....
FUJIKAWA REIKO!!
FUJIKAWA!
CLANK
CHAK CHAK
WE'RE NOT DONE YET!
.....!!
STING STING
DON'T FORGET TO DROP THE BASKET.
ROGER.
NG
GH!
KACHA
READY TO DE-SCEND!
WHO
WAH!
GYAH!
MP
GA RO T
!
DAKK
CLUNK
CLUNK

IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T TRUST YOU.
BUT IF NEO'S GOING, THEN I'M GOING, TOO!
SCREE
GACHAK
MISAKI-CHAN?
M-!
.....
IT'S A LITTLE CRAMPED. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
RAGUU
OKAY!
MISAKI-CHAN!
WAIT! FUJIKAWA!
NEO!
BUKA
BUKA
BUKA
CREAK
WRRRR

WHERE DID TERA-UCHI GO?!
DARN!
GUBO
BO BO
BL UB
GU RU RU RU RU
CLOP CLOP CLOP
CLOP CLOP CLOP
CAN WE REALLY DO THIS?
WHO ARE ALL THOSE PEO-PLE?
PHEW
SLAM
GA CHA
HEY!
GACHAK
MY GOD! DOES SHE KNOW THE TRUTH?! ABOUT EVERYTHING?!
WHY DID TOKUKO SHOW UP IN THIS TOWN?

I JUST...
CLICK
YOU...
YOU...
GATAT
YOU...
I JUST WANTED TO SHOW MY FAMI--
PSHT
TOO BAD, PRESIDENT ASAI.
I JUST...
I'VE MADE THE ARRANGE-MENTS.
FLOP
SHURURU
TOSS
MIS-TRESS!
?
COME ON BOARD.
TERA-UCHI.

THE HOSTAGES ... ARE GONE ...
PANT
DID BANDO DO THIS, TOO?
PANT
BAM
huff
huff
huff
HEH HEH HEH
WELL, IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I GOT RID OF THAT NUISANCE.
IF I JUST TRACK DOWN THE OTHERS ...
pant
pant
ZA
ZA
ZAT
WHAT'S IT DOING THERE?
HEY!
THAT'S THE BOAT I GOT FROM THE SYNDICATE!
ZAT
HUH?
WHERE...
THAT'S THE SPOT
gasp


DARN!
DASH
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS THAT SPOT!
IT CAN'T BE!
!!!
GO BO BO
GURU GURU
THE BOTTOM OF THIS LAKE IS PRETTY DESOLATE, ISN'T IT?
SIGH.
LOOK!
GRIN
KID?
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
YOU SURE THIS IS THE RIGHT PLACE?
SQUEAK

IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?
YOU DID IT, KID!
RUB
YEP!
RUB
GU
NT
!
METERS! 132 DEPTH!!
130
COULD-N'T SCUBA-DIVE DOWN THIS FAR.
TOKUKO'S RANSOM.
240 MILLION YEN IN GOLD!
GU RU RU RU RU
REIKO!! FUJIKAWA
SCREEE
JOLT

FROM HERE ON IN, I'M IN CONTROL OF THIS BOAT.
TOKUKO-CHAN?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MISAKI-CHAN?
SANAE-CHAN!
OF COURSE WE ARE!
ARE YOU GUYS UP THERE, TOO?
WHERE'S HE?
WHAT ABOUT THE PRESIDENT?
PRESIDENT?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
OH... NEVER MIND.
GUYS?
SERI-
CRACKLE
SERIOUSLY.
HAHAHAHA
STRAIGHT. THIS LET'S GET
ALL THE GOLD I'M TAKING
BACK.
EH?!
NO WAY!
OF COURSE!
DID HE MANAGE TO SNEAK OUT?

MOREOVER...
...YOU'VE GOT A WHOLE LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO.
AND YOU'D BETTER BRING MISAKI AND NEO BACK SAFELY.
.....
HEAR ME? DID YOU HEAR ME, TOKUKO-CHAN.
YEAH, I HEARD YOU.
SIGH
IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
WE'LL HAVE TO SPLIT IT 40/60.
HAHA
WHAT?!
THIS IS NOT A NEGOTIATION!
NOW THAT WE'VE AGREED, I SUPPOSE I'D BETTER GET TO WORK.
WAIT A SECOND.
GO BO BO
GU RU RU RU RU

SHUKO
BLUB BLUB
I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY KNEW TO LOOK HERE ...
SO THEY THINK THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
SHUKO
I KNEW IT!
BO BO SHURING
...BUT THEY'RE NOT GETTING IT!
GO GO
OKAY, BRING US UP!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO YELL! WE CAN HEAR YOU.
THAT WAS QUICKER THAN I EXPECTED.
IS THAT ALL OF THEM?
THAT'S ALL.
GO BO BO
GOT IT!
GAPA
GOK

KAC HA KCH
HM?
I GUESS WE'RE SAFE FOR THE MO-MENT.
OH, NOTHING. JUST TALKING TO MYSELF. ♡
CLAK CLAK
TELL THEM TO BRING UP THE GOLD FIRST.
YES, MIS-TRESS.
...WHY DID YOU COME DOWN HERE?
BUT THEN ...
SORT OF LIKE A PRIOR INVEST-MENT. ♡
?
I DIDN'T GET MY HANDS ON THE GOLD, BUT AT LEAST I GOT TO GET CLOSE TO THE BOY HERE.
WELL ...
IT'S COMPLI-CATED. YOU WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND. ♡
UGH!
ZAAA
WHAT'S HAP-PENING DOWN THERE ?! ANSWER!
WHAT IS IT?!
CL ANG
?!
GLU
GLU
GLU
GLU
GYAAAH!!

CLA
WHAT'S HAPPENING?!
HSSS
NG
CLANG
WH--
CRASH
SA
POT
BECHAK
SINK INTO THE BLACK DEPTHS AND DIE!
BWA HA HA HA HA!
I CUT THEIR LIFE-LINE!

CRACK
UH!
KYAH!
DOGAGA
WHONK
NEO!
CHAN!
MISAK!-
WHAT HAP-PENED?!
SOB
TUCHI!
TERA-
THEY SUDDEN-LY STOPPED RE-SPOND-ING!
?!
WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?!
GAN GAN GAN
HEH.
THAT'LL TEACH THEM TO GO WITH-OUT ME!
THUD

GRAB
TELL ME!
CLOMP
CLOMP
WHO BROUGHT UP THE GOLD?!
WHO WAS IN THERE?!
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME.
NOBODY IS LISTENING TO YOU ANYMORE.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!
WHAT IS THE ASAI FAMILY DOING HERE?!
NO... YOU CAN'T ...
DID HE DO IT?
DID HE CALL YOU HERE?
WHO?
ASAI FAMILY CHIEF OF STAFF, TERAUCHI GAKUTO.

KEIGO! ASAI!
DID THAT WORM BE-TRAY ME?!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
MY UNDER-STANDING IS THAT PRESIDENT ASAI WENT TO INDONESIA ON BUSINESS LAST WEEK.
IN OTHER WORDS ...
.....?!!
... YOUR PLAN WAS A COMPLETE FAILURE ...
...THE MOMENT THE YOUNG MISTRESS HEARD ALL ABOUT IT!
.....?!!
THE POD PREPARE TO RESCUE
HURRY!!
...ARG!
OUCH

BLUB
BLUB
SAKI-CHAN?
SPLASH
MISAKI-CHAN.
MISAKI-CHAN!
SPLASH
MISAKI-CHAN!
SNAP
SHAKE
SHAKE
WHERE ARE WE?
SHAKE
ARE YOU OKAY?
SHAKE
SHAKE
GYAH!
SPLA
?!
SH
SPLASH

NEO!
WHERE'S NEO?
HE'S RIGHT BESIDE YOU!
WATER!!
WE'RE FILLING UP WITH WATER!
CALM DOWN, MISAKI!
HIC
NEO!
POIK
AH...
SHIVER
SHIVER
!
ZO ZO ZO
SUP
LISTEN TO ME, MISAKI.
EH?!
IN THIRTY MINUTES, THIS PLACE IS GOING TO FILL UP WITH WATER.

IF THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN, THE PRESSURE WOULD STOP US FROM OPENING THE HATCH.
ZABA

ZABA
ZABA
ZABA
CALM DOWN.
IT'S OKAY.
FILL UP?
BUT...
ARE WE GONNA DIE?!

OPENING THE HATCH?
IT'S A GOOD THING.
WHA T?!

GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
I-- I CAN'T SWIM!
NEVER COULD
DON'T WORRY! HE BOY CAN SWIM!

BUT-- NEO'S SHOULDER IS HURT!
IF IT'S JUST YOU, HE CAN CARRY YOU!
I CAN SWIM BY MY-SELF!

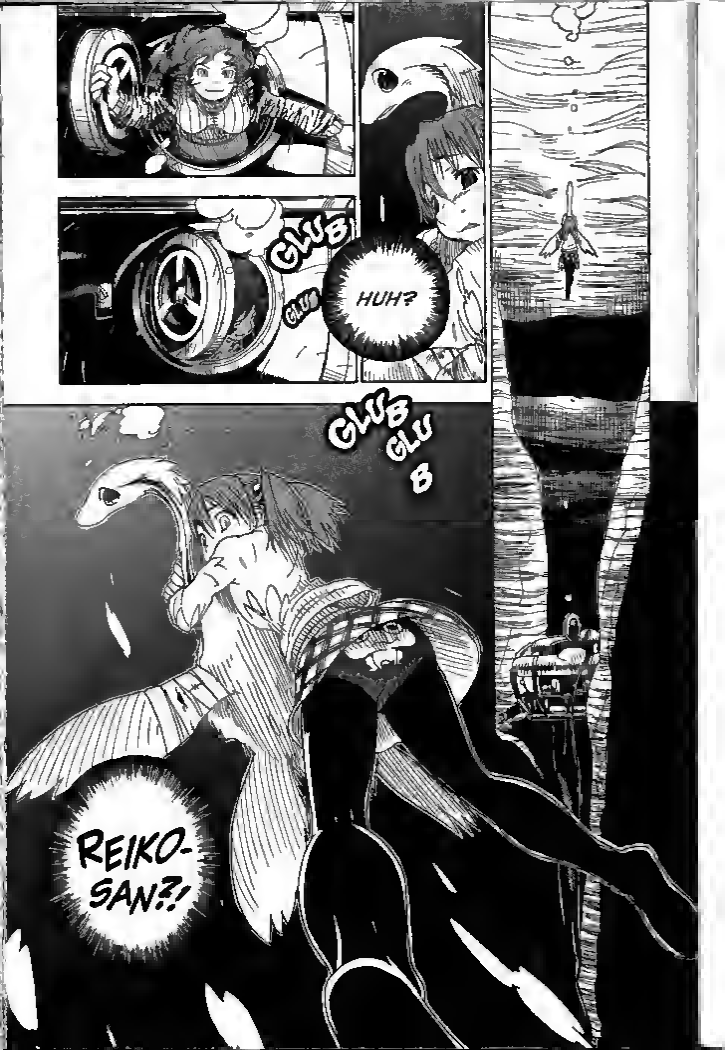
BUT --!!
NO BUTS !!
DO WHAT I TELL YOU!

FATHER! MISAKI'S IT'S
SUZU-SAN! AOI-SAN!
TERA-UCHI! ISN'T THERE SOME-THING WE CAN DO?!
VROOM
HEY!!!
WHAT'S HAP-PEN-ING?
Week Collect!
HEH HEH HEH HEH
HAVE ANY IDEA HOW DEEP THIS LAKE IS?
IT'S NO GOOD.
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOME-THING NOW!
THAT'S LATE!
WE COULD SEND DOWN A PRO-FESS-ION-AL DIVING TEAM ...
... BUT IT WOULD TAKE AT LEAST TWO HOURS TO ...
TUKA TUKA
SHUT UP!!
YOU'D BE BETTER OFF PLANNING YOUR FRIENDS' FUNERALS.
HEH HEH HEH HEH
NO UNTRAINED PERSON COULD SURVIVE IT.
IT'S MORE THAN THE WORLD RECORD FOR FREE DIVING!

PTUI
YOU NEVER SHUT UP, DO YOU?
THANK YOU, TERAUCHI.
HA HA HA!
CRACK
FUJIKAWA... SENSEI...
PLEASE... COME BACK ALIVE...
MISAKI-CHAN... NEO...
AFTER THAT, DON'T THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.
WHEN THE HATCH OPENS, BREATHE OUT.
THAT'S ALL.
YOU READY TO DO THIS?
IT'S ALMOST TIME TO GO.
O-OKAY.
SPLISH
SPLASH
SPLISH
hah
hah
hah
hah
hah
hah

SPLASH
TAKE CARE OF MISAKI-CHAN, OKAY?
hah
hah
HANG ON... JUST A LITTLE MORE.
hah
SPLISH
GASP
IT HURTS...
hah
hah
NEO?
NEO.
hah
THEY'RE WAITING FOR YOU UP TOP.
YOU'RE GOING HOME WITH MISAKI.
hah
SMOOCH
BLUB BLUB BLUB BLUBB
HERE WE GO!
SPLASH
hah
GASP
SPLISH
ISN'T THAT GOOD?
OKAY...
SPLASH
GSP

..BREATHE OUT.
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
WHEN THE HATCH OPENS...
AFTER THAT...
DON'T THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.


HUH?
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB
GLU
B
REIKO-
SAN?!

REIKO-SAN!
WHAT ARE YOU ...?
SWA!
IT'S BETTER THIS WAY ...
THE BOY'S ARM IS HURT...
SHUWA
HE COULDN'T CARRY TWO PEOPLE WHO CAN'T SWIM...
SHUWA
!!!
THINKING BACK...
GLUB GWB
HEH HEH HEH

SNAP
POP
EVER SINCE THAT DA...
LOOK! A GIRL!
SHE'S ALIVE!
...I'VE MET WITH NOTHING BUT DANGER.
ROAAR
CRACK
LOOK OUT! IT'S GONNA FALL!
CRACK CRACK CRACK
ARE YOU ALONE?
NO...
IF I DO THAT, I'LL BE ABLE TO JOIN THE REST OF THEM.
THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT I THOUGHT.
I WON'T BE ALONE ANYMORE.
HEH HEH
CLANG
CLUNK
I CAN'T MAKE FUN OF TOKUKO'S STUFFED BEAR.
BONK

THIS DEATH ...
... IT SUITS ME.
CL AN K

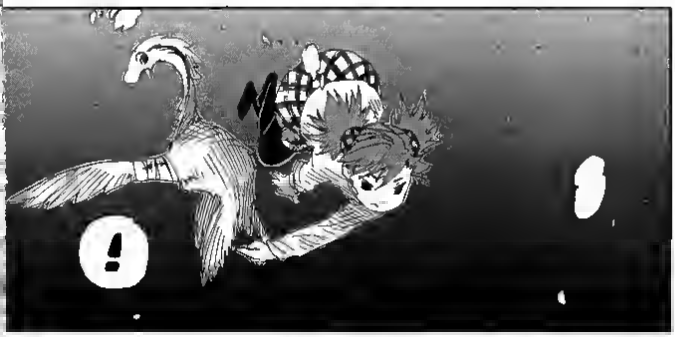
WHAT KIND OF MAN IS GRAND-PA?

HE VALUES LIFE.
LIFE?
YES, MISAKI. IT'S VERY VALUABLE.
IT'S SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE...YOU, ME, YOUR FATHER, EVERYBODY.
EVERYBODY?
YES, EVERYBODY.
WHAT IF WE LOSE IT?
IF YOU LOSE IT, THAT'S A BAD THING.
YOU HAVE TO LEAVE EVERYBODY BEHIND AND GO TO HEAVEN.
ALL ALONE?
YES, ALL ALONE.
YOU DON'T WANT THAT, DO YOU?
NO!

YOUR MOTHER'S LIFE, YOUR LIFE...
...THE LIVES THAT GRANDPA CREATED ARE ALL VALUABLE.
SO LIVE WELL.
GLUG
BELIEVE IN YOUR POTENTIAL TO CONNECT WITH LIFE.

DO WHAT YOU CAN DO ...

...FOR SOMEBODY ELSE.



...ME!
GLUB
KAPO
2

MISAKI-CHAN?!!
LOOK!
SOME-THING'S FLOAT-ING UP!
?!
BLOP
BLOP
BLOP
WHAT IS IT?!

SPLASH
GASP
MISAKI!
CHAN! MISAK!
CAREFUL!
SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH
TAKE REIKO-SAN.
SHE'S HURT.
AHA!
DASH
HEY, EVERY-BODY.
SMILE
HUF
HUF
DRIP
YEAH, I'M FINE.
MISAKI-CHAN, ARE YOU OKAY?

EEEH?!
POINT
MISAKI-CHAN!
HALF-NAKED!
YOU'RE
AH!
HUH?
WHAT HAPPENED?!
SLUMP
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T REMEMBER TAKING THEM OFF!
.....
SPLASH
MISAKI-CHAN, WHERE'S NEO?
I'M OKAY.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
I DON'T REMEMBER...
GRANDMOTHER
Mrs.
DADDY
YOU ALWAYS

murmur murmur
?
HEY!
NEO!
AH!
LOOK! IT IS! THERE
THE DINO-SAUR!
WHO MP
BWA HA HA HA!
THE PERFECT ORGAN TRANS-PLANT DONOR!
STOMP
I WILL GET THE LAST LAUGH!
HURRY! CAPTURE THAT THING,
FLOP
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
EVERY-ONE KNOWS THAT DINOSAURS ARE EXTINCT!

MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK.
♡
RIGHT, TERAUCHI?
YES.
YOU MUST BE HAVING TROUBLE SEEING WITHOUT YOUR GLASSES.
WHAT?
I CAN SEE FINE!
HAND THAT CREATURE OVER NOW!
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK
WHAT?!!
HEY, YOU!
?!
DON'T YOU HAVE BETTER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT?
YOU DIDN'T GET YOUR HANDS ON THE GOLD.
THAT MEANS YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO HAND OVER TO THE SYNDICATE. LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GOT A PRETTY BIG PROBLEM.

HE'S GETTING AWAY.
HAHAHA
GUARK
D--
DARN!
JUMP
AH!
YOU KNOW WHAT THEY DO TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T PAY WHAT THEY OWE, DON'T YOU?
NOW... WELL
FWUMP
EH?
I DON'T THINK YOU'RE GONNA SEE ANYTHING OF THAT GUY AGAIN.
THAT'S BECAUSE...
huf
...NO MATTER HOW FAR HE RUNS...
SPLASH
huf
SPLASH
GLUB
GRAB
?!

THANK YOU, REIKO.
NO, I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE GRATE-FUL.
GL
UB
GL
UB
GLUB
GLUB
THANKS.
IT'S THE SECOND TIME YOU GUYS SAVED ME.
DETEC-TIVE.
ELVI
YEAH.
SHIVER
SHIVER
SHIVER
WANT SOME COF-FEE?

THE GOLD HAS BEEN FOUND. THE HEIRESS AND FUJIKAWA REIKO ARE SAFE.
WHAT ELSE IS THERE FOR US TO DO?
DETEC-TIVE.
ARE YOU LEAVING AL-READY? WE JUST GOT HERE!
ZA, ZA,
LAKESIDE HOTEL
WE'RE DONE HERE.
WHAT ABOUT THE TRUTH?
FOR-GET A-BOUT IT.
HOHORO. A SMALL VILLAGE BESIDE A LAKE.
ONE STORY ENDED
AND THINGS WENT BACK TO NORMAL.

AND THE NEXT SPRING...
I'M OFF, GRANDFATHER.
REIKO-SAN RETURNED TO HER JOB WITH TOKUKO-CHAN.
WE'LL BE GOING NOW.
BE CARE-FUL.
IT SEEMS LIKE NO ONE SUS-PECTS HER.
... REIKO-SAN WILL REMAIN HER PIANO TEACH-ER.
AS LONG AS TOKU-KO-CHAN NEVER TELLS THEM THE TRUTH --
DO YOU THINK THEY'RE DOING OKAY?
YES. I'M SURE THEY ARE.
KNOWS ABOUT HER SECRET: PROBABLY ONLY CHOUJI.
THERE'S NO RUSH.
HURRY UP!
BUT SHE HERSELF
IT'S HARD TO SAY IF A WOMAN WHO HAD SET HER SIGHTS ON THE GOLD CAN BE SATIS-FIED AS A PIANO TEACH-ER.

WAAAAH!!
THEY WERE RAISED AS SIBLINGS, SO THEY'LL NEVER GET MARRIED.
BUT THEY'RE HAPPY TOGETHER.
HERE YOU GO.
THANKS
BANDO FUYUHIKO IS ALWAYS TOGETHER WITH HIS "SISTER" SUZU WHOSE LEG HAS HEALED.
HOLD ON, KYOICHI!
I'D ALWAYS WONDERED WHY AOI-SAN WAS SO PERSISTENT.
I FIGURED IT OUT RECENTLY.
WAAH
BIG BROTHER'S GONNA GET EATEN!
PANT PANT
Play dead! Play dead!
SWEAT SWEAT
HE TOLD REIKO THE DRAWING ON HIS FACE WAS DONE WITH A PERMANENT MARKER AND WOULDN'T COME OFF
BUT I THINK THAT, REALLY, HE DIDN'T WANT IT TO COME OFF.
UMPH!
AND SHE HERSELF DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN AT ALL.
MY MOM, HER CLASSMATE, HAD A CHILD THAT WAS ALREADY FOURTEEN YEARS OLD.
THAT'S HOW I ENDED UP HAVING A BROTHER.
THE NEXT DAY, THEY GOT A DOUBLE BED.
Hi, Misaki-san.
I FELT A LITTLE SORRY FOR HER, AND ACCEPTED HER RELATIONSHIP WITH DAD.

SPLASH
AND AS FOR US ...
MISAKI-CHAN! COME LOOK!
CHECK IT OUT.
SEE?
TIME
HE CAN STOP HIMSELF FROM CHANGING, EVEN WHEN HE GETS IN THE BATH.
GOOD BOY!
PAT
PAT
NOW YOU'LL BE ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL.
YEAH.
SNICKER
SNICKER
SCHOOL ...?
WE WORK EVERY DAY TO PACK IN TEN YEARS OF LOVE.
END